

Philippians Sermons

NOTE: These notes represent background material used to prepare expository verse by verse messages preached at [Wayside Communities Church](#) in Austin, Texas. These are sermon notes not sermon transcripts. This material hopefully will help you if you are leading a small group, teaching a Bible class or preaching a series on Philippians.

LIFE IN CHRIST

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Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

- [Philippians 1:12-18 The Advance of the Gospel](#)
- [Philippians 1:18a-26 To Live Christ, To Die Gain](#)

THE ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL SERMON NOTES Philippians 1:12-18

Let's do a quick review to help set the context for today's message—

Proverbs 23:7 says “as he thinks within himself, so he is.” Do you remember Paul's “state of mind” in his opening words in this letter? Or to ask it another way what is Paul's perspective and priority even though he is in prison?

We have seen that he is prayerful, joyful, thankful, filled with confidence that God would complete the work He began in each one. How could Paul be prayerful, joyful, thankful and confident in prison? Is that even humanly possible? Of course not, it's IM-possible, but it is HIM-possible. What do we mean by HIM-possible? What have we learned about Paul? Who fills Paul and controls Paul and supernaturally empowers Paul? You know the answer - The Holy Spirit. Paul is a wonderful example of a Spirit filled man able to live an abundant life even in prison-like circumstances! He has his priorities lined up – Jesus, Others, Yourself (which spells joy). Jesus is mentioned 18 times in chapter 1 and Gospel 5 times. If Paul were standing here today I think he would say to us what he said to the saints in Philippians 3:17-note “Brothers (and sisters), **join** in **imitating** me.” So as we study this passage today, keep alert for Paul's pattern, so that enabled by the Spirit you might follow it and experience prayer, gratitude, joy and confidence in Christ.

Let me ask you one more time because this principle is so important --- What “prison” are you in today? There may be no literal bars in your face or chains on your hands but you find yourself in circumstances that are so overwhelming that they make you feel like you are chained in a prison? Beloved, take heart! Paul is showing us there is a way to be prayerful, joyful, thankful and confident, even in our most adverse circumstances. As an old preacher once said “You are either in trial, have just come out of a trial or are just getting ready to go into a fiery trial. So may God grant that each of us learns more and more in a practical, experiential way what it means to be filled with Spirit and walk by the Spirit that He might enable us to rise above our circumstances and consider it all joy when we encounter various trials. We desperately need You to do this Lord. Amen

Philippians 1:12-18 ESV – **Observe three key words** = (1) **Gospel** (“it,” “the word”, “preach Christ,” “proclaim Christ,” “Christ is proclaimed”) (2) **Christ** (Lord), (3) **imprisonment** (“chains”) – three times

As we read did you notice Paul repeatedly emphasizes 3 truths in these 7 verses - **Christ** (Lord), the **Gospel** (and synonyms - “the word”, etc) and **imprisonment**. Do you see any simple relationship?

Every verse says something about advancing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Brothers and sisters, When our eyes are fixed on **Christ**, His **Gospel**, and its advancement, whatever is our “**prison**,” takes on an entirely new perspective, ultimately becoming a means to advance the Gospel.

12 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the **Gospel**,

13 so that **IT** has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my **imprisonment**(chains) is for **Christ**. (in Christ)

14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the **Lord** by my **imprisonment**, are much more bold to speak **the Word** without fear.

15 Some indeed **preach Christ** from envy and rivalry, but others from good will.

16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the **Gospel**.

17 The former **proclaim Christ** out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my **imprisonment**.

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, **Christ** is **proclaimed**, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice

So here is our outline for today and God willing and enabled by His Spirit we might get through each of these powerful points. I've entitled this message...

THE ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL Philippians 1:12-18

Comment: This section is the "Romans 8:28-note" (cf Ge 45:8, 50:20) of Philippians: "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God". Paul's circumstances were difficult, but he knew that God was in control, and that He was working the difficult circumstances out for his good and God's glory! You can be confident He will do the same in your difficult circumstances dear child of God. And so this section could be subtitled "The Fortune of Misfortune"

Let me give you some other titles:

- (1) A Pauline Perspective on Pain and Pettiness
- (2) "Contagious Christianity!"
- (3) The Fortune of Misfortune
- (4) Bonds Destroy Barriers
- (5) Chains Set the Gospel Free.
- (6) John MacArthur's title for Phil 1:12-18 - The Joy of Ministry in Spite of Trouble and Detractors

Paul Bound but Word not Bound - In his last letter ever written Paul reminds us why he is in jail writing "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my Gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment (chains) as a criminal; but the word of God (THE GOSPEL) is not imprisoned (chained). (2 Ti 2:8-9-note) The verses today will show how the Gospel cannot be imprisoned! The Gospel is living and active and mighty to save! Paul may be chained up but not the Gospel!

So let's look at "The Advance of the Gospel"

A) (Phil 1:12) **Afflictions Promote the Gospel**

B) (Phil 1:13-18) **Pioneer Advance of the Gospel**

- 1) (Phil 1:13) **Gospel to the Guards** = (Communicating to Captors)
- 2) (Phil 1:14) **Gospel Boldness to the Brethren** = (Contagious Courage) (Causing the Weak to Witness)
- 3) (Phil 1:15-18) **Gospel Preaching with Mixed Motives** = (Critics Exposed) (Preaching with Pettiness)

Beloved, God has an exciting, encouraging, edifying Word for each of us today. As we read and unpack these 7 great verses, may the Holy Spirit take the words read and spoken and drive them deep into our innermost being so that we walk away changed from the inside out, more like Paul and especially more like our blessed Savior Christ Jesus. Amen.

Let's read Philippians 1:12-13

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

Luke gives us some background to help us understand the effect of the Gospel on the Roman soldiers and also how "most of the

brethren" were motivated to share the Gospel--

And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him (surely many of the saints in Rome - the ones that gained courage to preach the Gospel), preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:30-31)

Here Paul was chained by an 18" handcuff, one cuff on his wrist and one cuff on a Roman soldier, 24/7 for 2 full years!

First notice the phrase **advance the Gospel**. The word for **advance** gives us a great word picture for it was used of an army of pioneer woodcutters who would go ahead of the regular army, cutting a road through an impenetrable forest, thus making possible the pioneer advance of the army into regions they otherwise could not have gone. So in our context, Paul's uses of the word **advance** implies that the Gospel had obstructions that needed to be removed. In using this word advance, Paul assures the Philippian saints that his circumstances have not only failed to curtail his missionary work, but they have actually advanced it and brought about a pioneer advance in regions where otherwise the Gospel could not have gone. And beloved, it is so in our lives. **Our God-ordained or God-permitted circumstances are used of God to provide for a pioneer advance of the Gospel in our Christian service.**

SIDE OBSERVATION: Notice the phrase the "**Gospel...has become known throughout the whole imperial guard**" That describes a phenomenal spread of the Gospel from ONE MAN! Numbers vary but several sources say there were some 15,000 imperial guards in Paul's day ([Wikipedia](#))! A new guard would be chained to Paul every 6 hours which would mean Paul had exposure to about 3000 guards over 2 years (assuming no repeat guards). That leaves 12,000 who never personally heard Paul and yet the inspired Word of God says the Gospel became known throughout all 15,000 elite guards! One Spirit filled man living with one purpose to proclaim Christ! **What would God do with each of us if we had a similar mindset and life purpose? May Paul's example stir a passion in each of us to proclaim Christ in wherever platform God appoints for us.**

Let me ask you a trick question -- Where is Paul as he writes this letter? In prison? Well you are only partially correct! Look at the little phrase "**FOR CHRIST**" which in Greek is literally **IN CHRIST**. Paul is in "2 locations at once!" One natural, the other supernatural. One temporal, the other eternal! Can you see how where Paul sees himself, changes his perspective on his suffering? Yes he is in chains, but he knows that more importantly he is in Christ. And the same dynamic is true in our lives, for we all have two addresses -- our temporal home in Austin and our eternal home in Christ. **May the Spirit use that simple truth to transform the way we think about trials and suffering in Christ and for His Name's sake. Amen.**

Now, just imagine the scene - Paul a captive, chained to an elite Roman guard. Do you see the incredible paradox? Paul a captive with a captive audience! How many preachers would love to have that problem! And to add to the paradox, the captive (Paul) was free in Christ and would be condemned only to temporal death, whereas the Roman soldier was in bondage to sin and Satan and ultimately condemned to eternal death. But as alluded to earlier the phrase **throughout the whole praetorian guard** suggests some soldiers were set free in Christ upon hearing the Good News! Paul's Gospel was like a rock thrown into a pond sending out ripples of waves until the entire praetorian guard had heard the Gospel. I wonder how many elite Roman soldiers we will meet in heaven? We get a clue from how Paul signs off his letter - "All the saints greet you, **especially those of Caesar's household** (which includes soldiers)." (Phi 4:22-[note](#) ESV) The fact that the Gospel permeated these battle tested elite Roman soldiers should encourage all of us to "throw the rock in the pond," that the Gospel might ripple forth. Only in eternity future will we see how many souls were impacted by the ripples produced by your Spirit enabled boldness to speak of Christ crucified, buried and risen.

Let's take that little phrase "**what has happened to me.**" Three points on this phrase:

(1) Why does he even speak about what had happened? Epaphroditus (Php 2:25-[note](#), Php 4:18-[note](#)) had come from Philippi and told him they were worried for they had heard about his imprisonment and surely thought that was the end of Paul's missionary activity.

(2) If I had written this I would have said something like this "I want you to know what has happened to me and how I have been thrown into prison (albeit "house arrest"), chained to a smelly Roman guard with stinking Roman goulash for breakfast, lunch and dinner! Not Paul. He had been given lemons so to speak but had chosen to make lemonade (aka "Road blocks are stepping stones to rise above our circumstances."). If you really want to know "**WHAT HAPPENED**" to Paul, you can fill in the blanks by reading Acts 21-28 where you read about his unjust imprisonment, his shipwreck (Acts 27:41-44), his being bitten on the hand by a deadly viper (Acts 28:3), etc, But he wanted to focus not on the specific events in Acts 21-28 but how God was able to take those events and cause them to work together for good like it says in Romans 8:28-note. In short all those things that happened had "really served to advance the Gospel." The Gospel was Paul's PRIORITY and this gave him proper PERSPECTIVE on his current condition of being in chains for Jesus' sake. Beloved, when the advance of the Gospel is your highest priority, it will change your perspective on your

“prison-like” circumstances! Paul was a man who lived Hebrews 12:2-note “fixing (his) eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.” (Great word picture - FIXING in Greek [click [aphorao](#) for more illustrations] = means looking away from all distractions and focused on one goal and is in the present tense = continually. E.g., [horses with blinders](#) to keep them from being distracted and keep them focused on the road, the “journey”.)

(3) Paul could have been bitter, because in Ro 1:15-note he had written about 2 years earlier from Corinth to the Roman Church **“I am eager to preach the Gospel to you also who are in Rome.”** And now God had granted his desire by bringing him to Rome as a prisoner instead of preacher. And yet he knew that whatever comes into our life is either sent or allowed by God’s permissive will. Or stated another way, if you are a follower of Christ, a child of God, your Father filters everything that comes into your life through His loving, omnipotent hands, always seeking our good and His glory in all the circumstances of our life! That may be difficult for you to believe today as you consider your circumstances, but that is why we need to let Paul’s PERSPECTIVE on PRISON-LIKE circumstances sink into our mind and our heart, so that the Holy Spirit might renew our mind and supernaturally change the way we view our painful circumstances that seem to us like a prison from which there is no escape!

If you are experiencing prison-like circumstances, is it possible that God might use your circumstances to for the pioneer advance of the Gospel? It never hurts to ask God to show you praying something like “Show me if my adverse circumstances are opening some new area in which I can spread the message of Good News.” Amen

Let me read you a little poem that relates to what we are discussing today (read twice and point out the change of letter in first line)

...

“Disappointment—His appointment,”

Change one letter, then I see
That the thwarting of my purpose
Is God’s better choice for me.
—Young

We need a Spirit enabled Pauline Perspective on Pain and Prisons so that we might all come to see our **DISAPPOINTMENTS** as **HIS APPOINTMENTS!**

Let me give you an illustration of the practice of this principle from the life of “the prince of preachers” and how God used a “prison like” circumstance to advance the Gospel...

Everyone has heard of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the famous British preacher, but few know the story of his wife, Susannah. Early in their married life, Mrs. Spurgeon became an invalid. It looked as though her only ministry would be encouraging her husband and praying for his work. But God gave her a burden to share her husband’s books with pastors who were unable to purchase them. This burden soon led to the founding of the “Book Fund.” As a work of faith, the “Book Fund” provided literally thousands of other pastors with tools for their work in proclaiming the Gospel. All this was supervised by Mrs. Spurgeon from her home. It was a pioneer ministry.

ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION OF HOW PRISON FURTHERED THE GOSPEL

“John Bunyan’s preaching was so popular and powerful, and so unacceptable to leaders in the seventeenth-century Church of England, that he was jailed in order to silence him. Refusing to be silent, he began to preach in the jail courtyard. He not only had a large audience of prisoners, but also hundreds of the citizens of Bedford and the surrounding area would come to the prison daily and stand outside to hear him expound Scripture. He was silenced verbally by being placed deep inside the jail and forbidden to preach at all. Yet in that silence, he spoke loudest of all and to more people than he could have imagined. It was during that time that he wrote [The Pilgrim’s Progress \(book and notes by John Piper\)](#), the great Christian classic that has ministered the Gospel to tens of millions throughout the world. For several centuries, it was the most widely read and translated book in the world after the Bible. Bunyan’s opponents were able to stop his preaching for a few years, but they were not able to stop his ministry. Instead, they provided opportunity for it to be extended from deep within a jail in the small town of Bedford to the ends of the earth.” (from John MacArthur)

(2) Phil 1:14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

CONTAGIOUS COURAGE

Paul’s chains not only gave contact with the lost, but gave courage to the saved. Paul’s courage was contagious!

Notice several things about this verse:

Most of the brothers – “Most of the brothers and sisters” not just the men but the women. He is speaking of the believers in Rome.

Are much more bold to speak – The word is speak not preach! Notice these believers in Rome were emboldened by Paul’s example to speak more openly about Christ in their day to day conversations. They weren’t preaching to their peers, they were simply speaking openly of their Savior and His good news. All too often I am guilty of PREACHING to someone rather than SPEAKING to them! Now where does this boldness come from? Did they just eat a bowl of Cheerios, the breakfast of champions, that morning? Of course not – they had heard of Paul’s boldness to speak of Christ to men with swords in their hands! But there is undoubtedly another source of their boldness as we see in the Book of Acts. Let’s read Acts 4:31 which is a description of the brothers and sisters in the early church (Wayside in Jerusalem).

“And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak ([Laleo](#), the same word used by Paul in Php 1:14) the word of God with boldness.”

We see this same pattern all through the book of Acts – filled with the Spirit, speaking boldly to others about Jesus and His Gospel. Even Paul himself asks for prayer to speak boldly...

(Pray) also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak (Again same word for speak in Php 1:14). (Eph 6:19-20-note ESV)

A couple of illustrations how suffering of one saint stimulated in other saints a desire to spread the Gospel...

Martin Luther’s work was spurred on by the courage of [John Huss](#), who was burned at the stake for his faith in Jesus. In fact listen to John Huss’ words to his executioner - “You are now going to burn a goose (meaning of Huss’ name), but in a century you will have a swan whom you can neither roast or boil!” Martin Luther came about 100 years after Huss encouraged by his martyrdom. What is fascinating is that Luther had a swan for his coat of arms!

The ministries of [John Wesley](#) and [George Whitefield](#) were built on the courage of [John Bunyan](#), who wrote [Pilgrim’s Progress](#). Bunyan suffered thirteen years in prison for preaching the gospel on the streets of Bedford. When asked if he would cease to preach, his valiant reply was, “Release me today and I will preach in the streets tomorrow.” So his enemies kept him in prison.

Alexander Maclaren - A soul all on flame has power to kindle others. There is an old story of a Scottish martyr whose constancy at the stake touched so many hearts that ‘a merry gentleman’ said to Cardinal Beaten, ‘If ye burn any more you should burn them in low cellars, for the reek (smoke) of Mr. Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon.... The history of the Church has largely consisted in the biographies of its saints, and every great revival of religion has been the flame kindled round a flaming heart.

Modern Example - After [Jim Elliot](#) and his four missionary friends were brutally martyred by the Auca Indians in South America in 1956, a large number of Wheaton College graduates offered themselves as missionaries in the years following (Elliot had graduated from Wheaton). (Elliot said "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.")

Beloved, you can write it down in gold ink...

COSTLY Christianity always inspires **COURAGEOUS Christianity!**

APPLICATION OF Philippians 1:12-14 - Three applications:

(1) Let’s pray for ourselves and for each other to be bold to speak the Gospel to the lost. If Paul in prison asked for prayer to be bold to share the Gospel (Eph 6:19-20) can we do any less?!

Francis Chan asks "Why are we cowards when it comes to speaking the Gospel? Could it be because there’s a deeper conflict going on? Could it be that speaking the gospel is warfare? I think so (see 2 Cor 4:3-4-note). Let us pray for great courage as we make the Gospel known to people. Let us think on the affliction of other missionaries and pray for God to grant us boldness in making the gospel known. (Christ-Centered Exposition)

(2) Enabled by the Spirit, let’s seek to be contagious Christians like Paul proved to be “contagious” to the brothers and sisters in Rome. As someone has said “Enthusiasm for Christ is contagious!” Has anyone

caught this sense of excitement and passion from being around you? Don't be too hard on yourself – practice Paul's pattern of J.O.Y – and the Spirit will stir the passion and excitement in your heart!

(3) Perhaps you've been a believer for years, maybe even decades, and you've lost that Pauline passion to share the Gospel – let me suggest you get around some very new believers and listen to them speak passionately of their desire to share Jesus and the Gospel with others. I think you will find their passion for Jesus contagious. Proverbs says "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." (Pr 27:17) Too often I have seen older believers say to young believers who are bubbling over with Jesus that they just need to get a grip and tighten their lip a bit. Talk about quenching the fire of the Holy Spirit!

(4) One practical suggestion on how we can "proclaim Christ" - Our day to day (Monday-Saturday) walk (especially, our attitude in difficult circumstances) always has an effect, not only on the lost, but also on the Lord's people. Both groups are watching us - Are we always grumbling (cf Php 2:14-note)? Or are we joyfully trusting in the loving sovereignty of God in the midst of difficult trials proclaiming the reality of faith in Christ both to the lost and the saved. Lost people will want to know why we're different, why we don't complain like everyone else. The Lord's people who are discouraged will see our faith in God in the midst of trials and be encouraged to trust Him and bear witness for Him.

[Dr W H Houghton](#), pastored Calvary Baptist Church in NYC and later served as president of Moody Bible Institute. When Dr. Houghton became pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle in Atlanta, a man in that city hired a private detective to follow Dr. Houghton and report on his conduct. After a few weeks, the detective was able to report to the man that Dr. Houghton's life matched his preaching. As a result of Houghton's faithful life, that man became a Christian. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there will be more souls led to heaven by a man who wears heaven in his face than by one who bears death in his looks.

[Adoniram Judson](#) - Many years ago when the great missionary Adoniram Judson was home on furlough, he passed through the city of Stonington, Connecticut. A young boy playing about the wharves at the time of Judson's arrival was struck by the man's appearance. Never before had he seen such a light on any human face. He ran up the street to a minister to ask if he knew who the stranger was. The minister hurried back with him, but became so absorbed in conversation with Judson that he forgot all about the impatient youngster standing near him. Many years afterward that boy—who could never get away from the influence of that wonderful face—became the famous preacher [Henry Clay Trumbull](#) ([The life story of Henry Clay Trumbull](#)). In a book of memoirs he penned a chapter entitled: "What a Boy Saw in the Face of Adoniram Judson." That lighted countenance had changed his life. Even as flowers thrive when they bend to the light, so shining, radiant faces come to those who constantly turn toward Christ! ([Read original story](#))

Now let's look briefly at the last 4 verses...

(3) Philippians 1:15-18 Preaching with Mixed Motives (Critics Exposed)

15 Some indeed [preach](#) Christ from [envy](#) and [rivalry](#), but others from good will.

16 The latter do it out of [love](#), knowing that I am put here for the [defense](#) of the gospel.

17 The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my [imprisonment](#).

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed

Alexander MacLaren - It comes, then, to be a testing question for each of us, have we learned from Paul this lesson of tolerance, which is not the result of cold indifference, but the outcome of fiery enthusiasm and of a clear recognition of the one thing needful? Granted that there is preaching from unworthy motives and modes of work which offend our tastes and prejudices, and that there are types of evangelistic earnestness which have errors mixed up with them, are we inclined to say 'Nevertheless Christ is proclaimed, and therein I rejoice, Yea, and will rejoice'? Much chaff may be blended with the seeds sown; the chaff will lie inert and the seed will grow. Such tolerance is the very opposite of the carelessness which comes from languid indifference. The one does not mind what a man preaches because it has no belief in any of the things preached, and to it one thing is as good as another, and none are of any real consequence. The other proceeds from a passionate belief that the one thing which sinful men need to hear is the great message that Christ has lived and died for them, and therefore, it puts all else on one side and cares nothing for jangling notes that may come in, if only above them the music of His name sounds out clear and full.

Wiersbe - It is a matter of historic record that the two great English evangelists, John Wesley and George Whitefield, disagreed on doctrinal matters. Both of them were very successful, preaching to thousands of people and seeing multitudes come to Christ. It is reported that somebody asked Wesley if he expected to see Whitefield in heaven, and the evangelist replied, "No, I do not." "Then you do not think Whitefield is a converted man?" "Of course he is a converted man!" Wesley said. "But I do not expect to see him in heaven—because he will be so close to the throne of God and I so far away that I will not be able to see him!" Though he differed with his brother in some matters, Wesley did not have any envy in his heart, nor did he seek to oppose Whitefield's ministry. Criticism is usually very hard to take, particularly when we are in difficult circumstances

We can overcome this harmful attitude, but first we must identify it. Jealousy believes that someone else is getting what we deserve—whether money, popularity, wisdom, skill, or spiritual maturity. Second, we must confess it. Call it what it is—sin. And third, we must give thanks. The moment we see someone enjoying any advantage, we must accept it with gratitude. We can keep jealousy in check by refusing to compare ourselves with others. As we learn to find our satisfaction in God, His grace enables us to rejoice with those who rejoice. When we do that, we have little room for envy. Besides, when we turn green with envy, we are ripe for trouble!

Have you ever been jealous of God effectively using someone in ministry? Don't worry I won't ask for a show of hands, but if we are honest, we would all answer "yes."

PRINCIPLE - Paul is not concerned about vindicating himself or being vindictive to the petty preachers. In showing us this attitude he gives us a perfect example of Php 2:4-note "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." The "others" he was looking out for were those lost souls who had never heard the Gospel preached and were at least hearing it from these men with sorry motives but a sound message!

APPLICATION - The clear application from this text for all of us in ministry (and every saint is in ministry) is to check your motives. Why do you do what you do in ministry? Check them now for they will be checked later!

Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God. (1 Cor 4:5)

PRINCIPLE – The INTRINSIC power (dunamis) of the Gospel - Paul's detractors preached the true Gospel, and it had an impact not because of the petty messenger but because of the powerful message for the "Gospel is the power of God (not of wrongly motivated men) for salvation to everyone who believes. (Ro 1:16-note)

A selfishly motivated preacher can still be used of God, though not as much as he could be otherwise. The power of the Gospel is more powerful than the package it comes in.

Phil 1:15 - Who is my life "preaching"?

The clear application from this text for all of us in ministry (and every saint is in ministry) is to Check your motives.

Why do you do what you do in ministry?

Ask yourself, Am I constantly comparing myself with others in ministry?

Do I rejoice when my friends succeed, or do I grow jealous?

Do I resent it when others are praised?

Does it bother you when others are praised, promoted, and more recognized than you?

What about if they try to tear you down in order to build themselves up?

Solution? (Phil 1:18). The way you overcome your spirit of envy and rivalry and even desire to afflict another person in ministry is by practicing the "J.O.Y." RULE (enabled by the Spirit - **J**esus first, **O**thers next, **Y**ourself last) like Paul – He focused on Jesus, His Gospel and His glory.

We need to practice the words of that great old Hymn –

[Turn your eyes upon Jesus](#), Look full in His wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace. Amen? Amen!

Paraphrase - What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed

Philippians 1:18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is

preached. (Phi 1:18 NIV)

Here are a few LESSONS FROM Philippians 1:15-18

- 1. We need to constantly check our motives in ministry, and continually seek to proclaim Christ** (Remember when we turn green with envy, we are ripe for trouble!) As an aside note that in these verses Paul is contrasting fleshly preaching versus Spirit filled preaching. Why do I say that? Because “envy and rivalry (strife)” are the rotten fruit of the flesh in Gal 5:20-21 [note](#) whereas “LOVE” (Php 1:16) is the supernatural fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5:22 [note](#). So if you are experiencing envy and strife, what’s the secret of eradicating that rotten fruit from your life? Confess it as a sin and then yield to and “Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the (evil) desire of the flesh.” (Gal 5:16 [note](#))
- 2. Respond to those who criticize your ministry by singing a hymn!** Imitate Paul = “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace.” Amen? Amen!

John MacArthur says that the aspect of ministry that “most distresses (him) is being falsely accused by fellow preachers of the Gospel. For whatever reason, there are men who seem to desire to discredit the ministry of others. As a result they falsely accuse other ministers, not because those they attack are unbelievers, but simply to discredit them....The pain runs deep when preachers of the Gospel slander, malign, misrepresent, criticize, accuse, oppose, or belittle your ministry.”
- 3. Petty messengers do not invalidate a powerful message!**
- 4. The Gospel has intrinsic power to save.** Romans 1:16-note says (a great verse to memorize) “I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for (Paul explains why he is not ashamed) it is the **POWER OF GOD** (the [dynamis](#) of God, the inherent supernatural divine power) for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”
- 5. And so the effectiveness of the Gospel is dependent on God's power not our polished presentation.** This truth of the intrinsic power of the Gospel should encourage you - you may not be the most eloquent speaker, but remember God is not looking for Gospel messengers with ability but with availability. We are to speak the simple, but powerful message that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day (don’t omit the resurrection!) That’s the Gospel in brief. If you speak that message in your casual conversations, don’t worry about how eloquent you are, but take heart that God’s Gospel will not return void without accomplishing what He intends. We are like a bunch of farmers, casting Gospel seeds into the soil of human hearts. As Paul said “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.” (1 Co 3:6) Beloved, be faithful to speak the Gospel of Jesus and you will be fruitful and will hear Jesus say “Well done, My good and faithful servant.” (Mt 25:21 ESV)”

Let’s review the main points we have covered in Philippians 1:15-18:

1. God can use your suffering circumstances to advance the Gospel.
2. Seek to be a Spirit filled contagious Christian.
3. Pray for Spirit enabled boldness to proclaim Christ.
4. Check your motives (at the door) when you minister.
5. Trust in the power of the Gospel, not your polished presentation.
6. AND REJOICE! (Ben will cover that next week).

ADDENDUM:

CHEERING THE ADVANCE OF THE CAUSE - Joe Stowell - One thing we have to get over if we are going to honor Christ in our work is our competitive spirit. The goal of serving Him is to advance His cause, not our reputation or ministry.

One Easter Sunday, a church across town decided to set a record attendance by having a “Friends Day” and throwing an Easter egg roll on their front lawn for all the kids who came. To be candid, I felt a sense of competition with this particular church and was quietly critical of its approach to ministry.

What really bothered me was the fact that many of the friends their people called to invite to their service were members of our church. My heart was reproved by Paul’s attitude in Philippians 1:18, where he spoke about others who were more successful than he, even though the motivation for their ministry was competitive and less than pure.

A woman in our church came to me one Sunday evening in great frustration as she blurted out, “Pastor, do you know how many they had at Temple Baptist Church this morning? They had more than fifteen hundred there, and many of them were our own people. I don’t think that’s right or fair, do you?” It was a test of my motives. I wish I could always be this on target, but thankfully the Word had done a remedial work on my carnal perspectives and I found myself saying, “Are you telling me that more than fifteen hundred

people in our town heard the gospel of Jesus Christ this morning? Isn't that the best news you've heard in a long time?" She was stunned and verbally backpedaled to "Well . . . well . . . yes, I guess it is."

When our focus is on the glory of Christ and the gain of His kingdom, it doesn't make a whole lot of difference who facilitates the goal. If Jesus is lifted up, our hearts should rejoice—unless we think our life and ministry are all about us.

Are you a competitor with other Christians or a colleague in the cause? Do you rejoice when they succeed? (Strength for the Journey)

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY SEE IN DEPTH COMMENTARY

- [Philippians 1:12](#)
- [Philippians 1:13](#)
- [Philippians 1:14](#)
- [Philippians 1:15](#)
- [Philippians 1:16](#)
- [Philippians 1:17](#)

TO LIVE CHRIST, TO DIE GAIN SERMON NOTES Phi 1:18-26

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice,

19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,

20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.

23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,

26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

OPENING STORY

A story is told about a man who preached an impressive sermon, seeking to be the pastor of a new church. Everybody loved it and voted for him to become their new pastor. They were a bit surprised, however, when he preached the same sermon his first Sunday there—and even more surprised when he preached it again the next week. After he preached the same sermon the third week in a row, the leaders met with him to find out what was going on. The pastor assured them, "I know what I'm doing. When you start living out this sermon, I'll go on to my next one."

Today's Scripture includes one of the most sublime, profound statements ever uttered by a human being = "To live is Christ, to die is gain." One could say this is Paul's "LIFE VERSE" and so we'll talk about it today. Remember that to hear a message on God's work in Paul's life is one thing but being willing to live the message as Paul did is quite another.

My prayer is that enabled by the Spirit we might all be changed by the preaching of God's Word, that Christ might become more and more our greatest desire, our Pearl of great price, and that we would live out this Gospel truth in such a way before the lost world that they would ask us why we are different (1 Pe 3:15). Amen

OPENING ILLUSTRATION - A young man came to W. E. Gladstone when he was Prime Minister of England and said,

"Mr. Gladstone, I would appreciate your giving me a few minutes in which I might lay before you my plans for the future. I would like to study law."

"Yes," said the great statesman, "and **what then?**"

"Then, sir, I would like to gain entrance to the Bar of England."

"Yes, young man, and **what then?**"

"Then, sir, I hope to have a place in Parliament, in the House of Lords."

"Yes, young man, **what then?**" pressed Gladstone.

"Then I hope to do great things for Britain."

"Yes, young man, and **what then?**"

"Then, sir, I hope to retire and take life easy."

"Yes, young man, and **what then?**" he tenaciously asked.

"Well, then, Mr. Gladstone, I suppose I will die."

"Yes, young man, and **what then?**"

The young man hesitated and then said, "I never thought any further than that, sir."

Looking at the young man sternly and steadily, Gladstone said, "Young man, you are a fool. Go home and think life through!"

This illustration begs the question **"WHAT ARE YOU LIVING FOR?" ARE YOU LIVING FOR TIME OR FOR ETERNITY?** Your answer will determine the direction of your life. If you are living for the wrong purpose, your direction will be wrong. If your purpose is vague or fuzzy, your direction will be fuzzy. If you don't know your purpose, you'll just be swept along by the currents of our age, doing what seems to bring you happiness. It is crucial that you be clear and correct in answering the question, "What are you living for?" As the story of the young man and Mr. Gladstone illustrates, the correct answer to that question must include some thought about the fact of death and what lies beyond. It must also include consideration of the uncertainty of life, so that whenever death may come, it doesn't thwart your purpose, for if your purpose is God's purpose for your life, for you are **immortal** until your work on earth is done! That's part of the Good News of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul was clear on his purpose. I would submit that the purpose for which he lived is the only purpose that takes eternity into account, so that whether we live a long life or whether it is cut short, that **purpose will be fulfilled**. In short, Paul's purpose was, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Php 1:21). That's what we will be talking about today "What is your purpose for living?"

Philippians 1:18b – In this I rejoice

This looks backward at the circumstances (including the spread of the Gospel in the Roman elite troops, the increased courage of the saints in Rome and the petty preachers) and he is able to rejoice because Christ is continually being proclaimed.

John MacArthur writes that **"One of the surest measures of a Christian's spiritual maturity is what it takes to rob him of his Spirit-bestowed joy.** Paul's maturity is evident in the present text as he makes it clear that difficult, unpleasant, painful, even life-threatening circumstances did not rob him of joy but rather caused it to increase. Although it is a gift from God to every believer and administered by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22), joy is not always constant and full. The only certain cause for loss of joy in a believer's life is sin, which corrupts his fellowship with the Lord, who is the source of joy. Such sinful attitudes as dissatisfaction, bitterness, sullenness, doubt, fear, and negativism cause joy to be forfeited. Consequently, the only way to restore lost joy is to repent and return to proper worship of and obedience to God. Anything other than sin—no matter how difficult, painful, or disappointing—need not take away the believer's joy. Yet even minor things can do so if believers react sinfully to them. A change for the worse in health, job, finances, personal relationships, or other important areas of life can easily cause believers to question the Lord, His sovereign wisdom, and His gracious provision. When that happens, joy is one of the first casualties. Believers are especially vulnerable when such things happen suddenly, taking them off guard. Their response is often one of anger, doubt, distrust, fear, self-pity, ingratitude, or complaining. In such cases, events that are not sinful

in themselves lead to sinful responses that steal joy.

Paul is in prison but he is a Spirit filled prison of Christ Jesus and so he is continually enabled to rejoice in the midst of trying circumstances.

Jean Nicolas Grou (1731-1803) said that “The chief pang of most trials is not so much the actual suffering itself as our own spirit of resistance to it.” (Might want to read that again.)

Let’s turn this excellent statement around, in a way that helps explain the joy of the apostle Paul by saying that “The Christian’s joy in the midst of trials is not to be found in the suffering itself (which would be mere masochism), but in the privilege of taking part in the good ends God has foreordained to come about through these trials.” Of course to do so means we need to trust God’s “good ends” out of “bad beginnings!” (from [Bob Deffinbaugh](#))

Philippians 1:18b-19 - Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,

POWER OF I WILL REJOICE looks to what the future holds and enabled by the prayers of the saints and the lavish (not skimpy) supply of the Spirit makes the choice to rejoice.

- Paul says that he “will” rejoice in the future. How does this challenge you?

I KNOW – This specific verb speaks of Paul’s absolute, unhesitating assurance and confidence in his eventual deliverance in life or in death.

THROUGH YOUR PRAYERS (Gk = **deesis**) - Php 1:19 tells us that Paul was joyful in part because of the prayers of God’s people. It gave him great comfort to know that Christians were praying for him. Friend, never underestimate the importance of intercession. In 1 Thessalonians 5:25, Paul asked the church in Thessalonica to pray for him and in 2 Thessalonians 3:1, he linked prayer with the proclamation and spread of the gospel: “Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.” He asked the Ephesian believers to pray that he would “make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19). Paul spoke of the effect of the prayers of praying saints in his second letter to the Corinthian, writing

You are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers for our safety. (2Co 1:11 NLT)

Christ Centered Exposition - James reminds us that prayer is effectual (Jas 5:16). In the book of Acts we have numerous examples of the church praying for boldness and endurance in trial (e.g., Acts 12). Paul told the Corinthians that God was using their prayers to help them in his great trials (2 Cor 1:5,8-11). He also implored the Romans, the Ephesians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians to pray for him (Ro 15:30; Eph 6:18-19; Col 4:3-4; 1 Th 5:25; 2 Th 3:1). So this reference to the Philippians isn’t some passing comment. **Paul really believed, like the other apostles and early saints, that God uses the prayers of His people to provide strength to His servants. So then, let’s ask others to pray for us. And let’s pray for others. What an encouragement it is to know that people are praying for you, and how important it is that you are praying for others.** (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Philippians.)

APPLICATION:

- Don’t miss the connection between how prayer leads to provision to men and praise to God.
- As someone has well said, “Prayer ON earth leads to power IN heaven.” Is this mysterious? Of course! But it is Scripturally true!
- What does this passage teach us about the importance of intercessory prayer?
- For whom have you interceded this past week?
- Are you praying for your pastors and elders like the Philippian saints were praying for their “former pastor?”

Here is a modern example of the **power of intercessory prayer** to encourage you to intercede (especially for Unreached People Groups):

Latin American Prayer for Pashtuns by KC - “If you are wondering whether prayer really makes a difference, in this particular case we have the proof,” says missionary David Taylor. A Christian radio ministry had been broadcasting for years to the unreached Pashtun people of Pakistan and Afghanistan (>30 million). They were receiving about 60 responses to their program each month. “As soon as thousands of churches in

Latin America began praying for the Pashtuns, this radio program began receiving hundreds and then thousands of responses each month," Taylor exclaims. "Like the Bible story of the disciples whose nets could not handle all the fish, this ministry is now asking for help from others to handle this unexpected interest in the gospel!" This miracle did not happen overnight. About five years ago, Guatemalan missionary Rigoberto Diguero began working with the Adopt-A-People movement to encourage Latin American believers to regularly pray for one unreached people group. That people group was the Pashtuns. He worked especially hard with his own denomination, Assembly of God. Five years later, we are hearing about the results. There are many other mission agencies and denominations in Latin America that can do the same. Just think what will happen when they begin to adopt the Tibetans, Brahmins, and Japanese! Pray for this prayer movement, which began in El Salvador, to spread to every mission agency and every country in Latin America. ([Global Prayer Digest entry May. 19, 2017](#))

HELP OF THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST – The Greek word the ESV translates "help" ([epichoregia](#) - related verb [epichoregeo](#)) gives us our English word chorus. Whenever a Greek city was going to put on a special festival, some would pay for the singers. This donation had to be a LAVISH one to assure the festival would not be hamstrung or crippled by lack of funds! Thus this Gk word came to mean "to provide generously and lavishly." Paul was not depending on his own dwindling resources (for deliverance); he was depending on the generous resources of God the Holy Spirit.

The thought is that no expense was spared in order that a top notch performance might be achieved. How beautifully this word picture ties into what follows!

APPLICATION:

- We need to adopt the same approach as Paul when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances! We need to renounce self-reliance and rely on the Spirit's supernatural sufficiency!
- Are you learning Paul's secret of [contentment](#) which we will talk about in [Php 4:11-13-note](#)?

DELIVERANCE – The Greek word ([soteria](#)) means rescue from grave danger (e.g., martyrdom in Paul's case) and can also refer to salvation (heaven in Paul's case). Whatever the precise meaning, Paul knew that what he was going through was just temporary. This is similar to what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (in the NLT paraphrase):

For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. (2Co 4:17-18NLT-[note](#))

Many commentators believe Paul was eventually released, traveled to Spain and then was arrested again before he was martyred. It's fascinating that the phrase, "**this will turn out for my deliverance**" is an exact quote from the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament of Job 13:16. Just as Job knew that he would eventually be delivered, whether out of death, or through death, so Paul knew that he would win either way. Here is the point of Paul quoting Job a righteous man in the OT who was also confident God would deliver him through life or death -- Paul trusted in the Word of God. The Word of God had so permeated his being that he would reach into the "concordance" of his heart and pull out this quotation from the book of Job!

So Paul was confident of his deliverance based on 4 things (1) the prayers of the saints, (2) the provision of the Spirit, (3) the trustworthiness of God's Word and (4) past experiences with God. Where do we see that? Paul says in [Php 1:20](#) "Christ will even now, **as always** (AS HE HAD **ALWAYS** BEEN BEFORE IN THE MANY DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS TRIALS HE HAD EXPERIENCED), be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."

Also do not miss the connection between how prayer is associated with the provision of the Spirit. Yes the Spirit is sovereign, but yes, God answers the cries of His interceding children. How God's sovereignty and man's responsibility work together seamlessly is a mystery but it is rock solid truth we can count on. Someone said it this way -- "Prayer on earth leads to power in heaven." **C S Lewis** adds that "God could have chosen to do His work on this earth in any fashion He wanted, but He chose in His sovereignty to do it in response to prayer."

Personal Application -- Don't hesitate to ask others to pray for you when you are in difficult circumstances. Fill out a request card and drop it in the collection box and rest assured you will be prayed for. Let us know if you want to keep the request confidential for the pastors and elders. And when you see things transpire that can only be ascribed to God, let us know so we can together give God all the glory!

Here are some other applications of Philippians 1:19 -

- Are you fixing your eyes on your difficult circumstances or upon your dynamic Deliverer Christ Jesus? (cf Heb 12:2-note). Ask God for the grace to do the latter.
- Do you ask others to pray for you when you are suffering through a trial or do you go it alone? The great apostle Paul did not hesitate to ask for prayer - (1 Th 5:25 "Brethren pray for us." 2 Th 3:1, Eph 6:19-20) Be willing to humble yourself and ask for prayer, for God says He is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. (Jas 4:60-note)
- Do you believe that the specific prayers by righteous saints on your behalf are powerful and effective? (cf Jas 5:16)
- Are you learning to rely on our Father's **lavish provision** of the Holy Spirit to enable you to do supernaturally what you cannot do naturally (like Joy in the midst of trying circumstances)?

Philippians 1:20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage (complete boldness) now as always Christ will be honored (exalted) in my body, whether by life or by death.

WE EXALT CHRIST IN OUR BODIES!

What is Paul saying in this passage? Paul was bold and unashamed and was concerned only that Christ would be magnified in his **body** regardless of what awaited him--life or death. There was no wavering on his part.

KEY POINT: Instead of bringing shame to our Lord, we exalt Christ in our Bodies!

How are you doing? Did you exalt Him in your body this past week? Remember if you are a believer, your BODY is no longer your own Paul in fact commands to glorify ("exalt, magnify") Christ in our BODY! (1 Cor 6:19-20-note).

Practically speaking, how do we exalt (or not exalt) Christ in our bodies?

This is a very practical question. It means that we may either exalt Christ or bring shame to His name by our attitudes, our words, and our behavior.

- How do you use your eyes? A lustful glance at a woman or even at a sexy picture does not exalt Christ.
- How do you use your ears? Do you listen to music that defiles you or music that exalts Christ? Do you listen to gossip or slander?
- How do you use your tongue? Your hands? Your feet? Your countenance?
- Do you use your body in purity or for sensuality?
- What about your personal appearance?
- Do you dress to be seductive or to attract attention to yourself? Or, do you exalt Christ?

To "live (is) Christ" means to exalt Him through **everything** we do.

How would this be possible? Where does Paul get the power to always honor Christ in his body? Through the lavish supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Paul describes here the performance he is aiming for through the "lavish supply" of Christ's Spirit.

Paul's "body" is the theater and the production is "the magnifying of Christ--whether by life or death."

EAGER EXPECTATION - Earnest expectation" ([apokaradokia](#)) is a word "composed of the preposition 'away,' the noun 'head,' and the verb 'watching,' and indicates watching something with the head turned away from other objects. It indicates the concentrated, intense hope which ignores other interests and strains forward as with outstretched head. It's only other use is in Romans 8:19-note in the beautiful phrase "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. (ESV)." Creation is eagerly awaiting the day our bodies are GLORIFIED! Hallelujah!

In other words, this word pictures "the eager, intense look which turns away from everything else to fix on the one object of desire; to watch with head outstretched." (You could stretch your head out looking intently out a window to illustrate this word picture). The word was used of watchmen looking into the darkness for a beacon of light. Paul fixed his eyes on Christ the Light of the world (Jn 8:12) and was determined that in nothing would he be ashamed. He would be a witness for Jesus Christ. Paul knew he must appear before the Lord someday and did not want to be ashamed. (cf 1 John 2:28-note)

IT IS MY...HOPE - **Hope** ([elpis](#)) as used in the NT almost always means not a "hope so" but a "hope sure" and speaks of an absolute assurance of future good or an absolute certainty that God will do good to me in the future! So when Paul spoke of hope in this passage, he was not expressing uncertainty. When someone asks you if the Spurs can beat the Warriors, you might reply, "I hope so!" This is not what Paul meant. To him, a Christian's hope was a reality, a certainty! **What was Paul's hope?** (1)

That he in no way would be ashamed and (2) that no matter what happened to him personally, he would "win!"

Why would he need to be bold (and not ashamed)? He is in enemy territory, he also has some preachers in Rome who wish him distress in prison – So where does Paul's boldness come from? The same place his hope comes from - the intercessory prayers of the saints (do you really believe prayer works?), from the empowering presence of the Spirit and from his previous experience with Jesus (we get that from the phrase "as always").

Regarding the word "**help**" (ESV) it is better rendered by the lavish enabling provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Why do I say that? Because the word "help" implies I have some strength in myself to hope or to be bold and all I need is a little push! We don't just need "**HELP**" from the Spirit. We need the Holy Spirit to give us both the **desire** and the **power** to hope and to be bold as Paul explained in the next chapter...

"For **God** [THE SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST] is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him." (Phil 2:13NLT-[note](#) The NLT is an excellent paraphrase of Php 2:13)

Let's unpack that phrase "CHRIST WILL BE HONORED IN MY BODY" as it is filled with practical application for our lives.

In summary Paul's passion in life can be well summed up from this verse: ALL OF CHRIST THROUGH ALL OF ME AT ALL TIMES IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. Note what the purpose of the lavish supply of Christ's Spirit is for--the magnifying (lit.- enlarging) of Himself. God only funds His own projects!

HONORED – The Greek word means to **make great** – Ponder this a moment. We as redeemed sinners, have the unspeakable privilege according to Paul in some way to "make Jesus great." Obviously HE IS GREAT, IN FACT THE GREATEST, but we have an opportunity of a lifetime to show Him off so that He is glorified in and through our lives to the world, both saved and lost! And where are we to exalt Christ? In our bodies! In truth our bodies are not ours but belong to Christ!

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that **you are not your own**? For you have been bought with a price: therefore **glorify** ([aorist imperative](#) - see [explanaton](#)) God in your body. (1 Cor 6:19-20-[note](#))

It is fascinating to note that (in Mt 23:5) the same Greek word for **HONORED** was used to describe the Scribes and Pharisees lengthening (making great) the tassels of their garment. Why? To draw attention to themselves! Remember the "J.O.Y." pattern? Jesus-Others-Yourself -- Jesus first, then others, us last! Paul said we make Jesus great by placing Him first in our lives! John the Baptist in John 3:30 said it this way – Jesus must continually, daily be increasing, we must ever be decreasing. This is not one stop shopping but a life long journey of sanctification, of becoming more and more like Jesus as we take in His living Word and transformed by His life giving Spirit – The lost world desperately seeks to glorify their Self, but we seek to glorify the Savior. Not us glorified but Jesus is glorified, Jesus magnified in our life. It's not just a song we sing on Sunday, but a life lived in the power of the Spirit on Monday (and all week long)!

Let me illustrate the principle of "MAKING JESUS GREAT" by taking you to the Sistine Chapel and Michelangelo's classic masterpiece.

(1) ILLUSTRATION - Michelangelo ([PAINTING THE SISTINE CHAPEL](#)) is said to have often painted with a brush in one hand and a shielded candle in the other to prevent his shadow from covering the masterpiece he was creating. As God works through us to craft His glory and gain, we must be careful that our shadows are not cast across the canvas of His work.

God's glory through us is the visible expression of His marvelous character in our lives (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 1:11–14). We display God's glory when His mercy, grace, love, justice, and righteousness are actively evident. As we live to glorify Him, He becomes evident through us and His cause is advanced. In Philippians 1:20 Paul declared: "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." Sadly, given our tendency to be taken with ourselves, we are more prone to live for our own glory. The goal is to follow the example of Paul, who said, "For to me, to live is Christ . . ." (Philippians 1:21).

No one can have it both ways. We either live to **ENHANCE** our own significance or live to **EXALT** our own Savior!

Enabled by the Spirit, consider doing something this week that magnifies Christ in and through your life. Demonstrate the significance of an aspect of His character—love, justice, mercy, grace, truth—and then give Him the credit.

Let me ask you –

- In what ways does your life reflect His glory and advance the life and Gospel of Jesus?
- Do you need to make any adjustments? Living for Christ makes life worth living.
- Do you need to make a mid-course (life) correction?
- In light of the fact that Paul lived to “make Jesus great,” when people look at you do they see the greatness and glory of Christ, or do they see you?
- Are you making Christ bigger or smaller by the way you’re living?

Psalm 34:3 says, “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together.”

(2) ILLUSTRATION - BEING A LENS FOR JESUS - Each of us is a lens that magnifies what we live for. People can look at and through our lives and see what is really important to us. The athlete magnifies his sport, his team and his winning record. The musician magnifies the instrument he plays. The scholar magnifies his discipline. As God's people, we should magnify the Lord. The sinner's great desire is to magnify one's self. The saint's great desire should be to magnify our Savior. The Apostle Paul said, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20).

- Are you magnifying the Lord today?
- Can people listen to your words, look at your life, measure your actions and say, "She belongs to the Lord. He belongs to the Lord"?
- It's important that people see the Lord, not us.

The most important quality of a lens is cleanliness. When the lenses of my glasses get dirty, I see the dirt. So I have to clean them. When we are dirty, people see us rather than the Lord. Let's keep our lives clean today. Let's magnify the Lord together; He is worthy of all praise. Christians are on display before the world. What an opportunity and responsibility you have to impact others for Christ! If you love the Lord, you will want to magnify Him. **Watch your words and actions. Are you living for Jesus? Keep the lens of your life clean so that He may be magnified through you.**

(3) ILLUSTRATION - George Atley, a young Englishman with the heart of a hero, was engaged in the Central African Mission. He was attacked by a band of hostile tribesmen. He had a Winchester repeating rifle with 10 loaded chambers. The tribesmen were completely at his mercy. He concluded that if he killed them it would do the mission more harm than if he allowed them to take his life. So, as a lamb to the slaughter he was led; and when his body was found in the stream, his rifle was also found with its 10 chambers still loaded. He had made the supreme sacrifice, motivated by his burden for lost souls and his unswerving devotion to his Savior. With the apostle Paul, he wanted Christ to be magnified in his body, "whether by life or by death."

Philippians 1:21 – For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

THE PURPOSE OF A LIFE WELL LIVED!

Probably no verse better summarizes Paul's life purpose and passion (except perhaps Gal. 2:20). While still on earth, Paul saw life as inextricably bound up in covenant union with Christ, much like a marriage covenant that links the two spouses as one flesh!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIVE A LIFE LIKE PAUL AND BE ABLE TO MAKE THAT SAME DECLARATION?

Paul commands us to imitate him as he imitates Christ in 1 Cor 11:1. And remember that God's commandments always include His enablements! What are His enablements? Two things: Filled with the Spirit, Filled with the Word.

And what is the Word we should be filled with in this present context? It is the incredible word of Paul's Secret to Spiritual Success here in Php 1:21! In Latin it is Paul's **Summun Bonum** (Highest Good). In French Paul's **Raison Detre** ([click to pronounce](#)) which means "his purpose for existence!"

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “LIVE CHRIST”?** In brief, to “live Christ” means to live in union with Christ, so that He becomes my all in all.

Php 1:21 is Heaven's version of Hamlet's quote "To Be or Not to be, that is the question" (as he contemplated suicide), but to Paul the answer to life's most profound question of Why am I here? is, "To live Christ, and to die gain". Note that there is no verb for “**is**” in

the Greek so his declaration is even more dramatic – TO LIVE CHRIST. Christ was His life! And beloved, He is also our life, through His Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Php 1:19).

Let's read Php 1:21 in the Amplified Version:

For to me, to live is Christ **He is my Source of joy, my Reason to live** and to die is gain **[for I will be with Him in eternity]** (Ed: I would add "for I will be like Him for eternity"! - see 1 John 3:2^{note})

- **Christ really is all we need.**
- **We must grow to know experientially what it means to “live Christ.”**

Listen to Paul's similar thought in Colossians – As I quote it note that the first clause speaks of our LIFE, the second clause speaks of our DEATH. Listen carefully and I will repeat it...

Col 3:4^{note} When Christ, [*who is* = Not in Gk] our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Col 3:4 When Christ, our life (TO LIVE IS CHRIST), is revealed, THEN you also will be revealed with Him in glory (TO DIE IS GAIN).

In Php 1:21 TO LIVE CHRIST. In Col 3:4 CHRIST OUR LIFE. This helps understand Paul's great affirmation in Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

NOW CHANGE "I" TO "WE" FOR THIS IS APPLIES TO ALL OF US WHO ARE IN CHRIST BY GRACE THRU FAITH...

How can Paul say “to live is Christ?” How did Christ live in Paul and in us today?

As he said in Php 1:19 by the lavish provision of the **SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST**. This begs the question –

Does the Spirit of Jesus Christ live through me each day?

Do I get up on Monday morning and pray something like...

(if you can carry a tune, you could sing these words to the congregation or just read them)

[Spirit of the Living God](#) (link to classic 1926 spiritual song)

Fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Spirit of the living God,

Fall afresh on me.

Amen!

Before going on, let's take a little quiz How would you complete the following sentence?

"For to me to live is _____."

- What word, phrase, passion, hobby, etc would you put in the blank?
- Don't miss the point that no one leaves that sentence blank.
- Everyone finishes it with something.
- So I will ask again if you don't fill the blank with Christ, what do you put there?

Here are four questions to help you “fill in the blank”:

1. Where do I tend to spend spare time and money? Mt 6:21^{note}
2. What objects or persons give emotional delight as I mentally brood over them?
3. Where do my thoughts flow in my spare time?
4. To what or whom do I turn during times of emotional upheaval or crisis?

Let's all be very honest – If you filled in the blank with “Christ” well I say PRAISE THE LORD! But in truth very few of us are at the point of spiritual maturity described by Paul, but that should not keep us from striving to fill in the blank with CHRIST, alone.

Let me give you a simple way to unpack one of the most profound statements ever written (Php 1:21a) with 3 words...

Personal...Practical...Possible!

Victorious Christianity is **personal**, "to me." It is **practical**, "to live." It is also **possible**, "is Christ."

ILLUSTRATION: Missionary Bill Wallace, a doctor in China, loved Php 1:21. When he was arrested by the Communists and brutally treated, he would scribble this verse and others on the wall of his cell to help keep his sanity. After months of interrogation and abuse, he was found dead. The Communists claimed that he hanged himself, but his body showed signs of having been beaten to death. His friends buried him with honor and inscribed over his grave the words they felt described the motivation of his life: "For To Me To Live Is Christ." Notice that in Bill Wallace's death he fulfilled Paul's desire in Php 1:20 "Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death!"

ADDENDUM: Steven Cole asks and addresses the critical question -

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "LIVE CHRIST"? To "live Christ" means to live in union with Christ, so that He becomes my all in all. The concept of being "in Christ" was vital to Paul's understanding of what it means to be a Christian. He addresses this letter "to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi" (Php 1:1). The instant a person truly believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, he is joined organically in a living, real union with Christ the Head as a member of His body, the church. To be "in Christ" means that all that is true of Christ is true of the believer. As Paul writes (Rom. 6:10, 11), "For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." The believer is in union with Christ. While that is our true standing before God, we must grow in our experience of the reality of that standing, so that in our daily lives, we live in fellowship with Christ, communing with Him and depending on Him for everything. It means growing to know Christ intimately (Phil. 3:10). It means growing to love Christ with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). It means submitting all of my thoughts, emotions, words, and deeds to the lordship of Christ, so that I seek to please Him in all respects (Col. 1:10). It means growing to experience Christ as my "all in all" (Eph. 1:23; Col. 3:11). Every aspect of life must be centered around the Lord Jesus Christ. The glorious person of Christ, and nothing less, is the Christian life. Of course, our experience of "living Christ" is a process that is never fully realized in this life. As Paul says (Phil. 3:12), "Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus." Even the most godly Christians have times when Christ seems distant and the soul is dull and sluggish. In this life we never reach a point where we are not tempted by sin, where we do not have to battle the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life (1 John 2:16). But, each of us who are truly children of God will have as our focus to live in an experiential way the fact of our union with Christ, so that He becomes our all in all.

- For more discussion of what it means and what it looks like to be able to say "To live Christ" [see commentary notes](#) on Philippians 1:21.

TO DIE IS GAIN

Spurgeon once said "It is not death to die if the death of Christ be but the life of the soul."

Did you catch what Paul is saying when he says "to die is gain"? It is easy to miss it! Paul goes on to state that death is THE ENTRANCE to "gain," NOT the exit from living. Sadly, most of us see it as the latter, as what we are losing or leaving behind and not what we are gaining!

Let me read you a little poem that beautifully expresses Paul's sentiment:

It is not death to die
To leave this weary road
And 'midst the brotherhood on high
To be at home with God.

It is not death to close
The eye long dimmed by tears
And wake in glorious repose
To spend eternal years.

It is not death, to bear
The wrench that sets us free
From dungeon-chain to breathe the air
Of boundless liberty.

It is not death to fling
Aside this sinful dust
And rise on strong, exulting wing
To live among the just.

Jesus, thou Prince of life
Thy chosen cannot die
Like Thee, they conquer in the strife
To reign with Thee on high.

Notice also that there is a close connection between the first half of this verse and the second. The more fully our life is bound up in the person and program of Christ, the greater "our gain" in heaven. (2 Cor 4:17-18)

So let's probe a little deeper and ask from the verses in context what is the GAIN to which Paul refers?

Look at Php 1:23 the phrase "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." The Greek word for "with" is not beside Christ (which will also be true!), but intimately united with Him in an eternal unbreakable covenant giving us perfect union and perfect communion with the Lover of our souls...FOREVER! That is your and my GAIN, BELOVED!

Second, let's expand a little more on the word "gain" in "to die is gain"...

The Greek word for gain was a monetary term meaning to make a profit on an investment. If you play around with the Stock Market, you understand the word GAIN.

Here is the point –Paul's (and our) GAIN is not temporal trinkets, but timeless treasure!

To die for an unbeliever is to give up all your possessions, but to die as a believer is to gain your greatest Possession!

J Vernon McGee explains it this way -- "Gain is always more of the same thing. If to live is Christ, then to die would be more of Christ!"

Why are we so easily tempted to dabble with the passing pleasures of this passing world?

At death we collect the "dividends" from the Spirit enabled investments of our earthly, temporal life and Christ pays the richest dividends and will pay them throughout eternity! It is therefore no surprise that Paul said...

Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home (in our earthly body) or absent, to be pleasing to Him, FOR we must all appear before the judgment seat (BEMA) of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (NOT SPEAKING OF SIN WHICH IS PAID IN FULL BUT OF USELESS ACTIVITIES). (2 Cor 5:9-10)

We will gain both in what we lose (sinful body, temptation, sorrow, sufferings, enemies, etc.) and in what we gain (glorified body, personal presence with Christ as we discussed, boundless joy, precious reunions with departed relatives and friends and the list goes on and on). To make the most of today, keep Christ, heaven and eternity constantly in mind because as someone has well said we are not ready to live until we are ready to die.

Paul knew that death is not a defeat to the Christian but is merely a graduation to glory, a "net gain" (so to speak) in accounting terms! When a Christian dies, he or she really finally and fully begins to live, for he or she passes into the perfect, eternal, glorious union with Christ, unhindered by the world, the flesh and the devil. The unbelieving world thinks we are placed in a cemetery when in fact we are ushered into a sanctuary! We like Paul will enter the presence of Christ at the moment of death and this will be our ultimate "gain".

People wonder what the purpose of life is today and what they are here for. Paul says to live is on this earth is Christ and to die is gain. Jim Elliot understood this purpose in his short life for he was killed at age 29 by the Auca Indians whom he had gone to tell about Jesus wrote in his journal words that sound a lot like the apostle Paul...

"He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

The Apostle Paul would agree. Once you decide that your life won't last forever, you are free to invest it in a cause greater than

yourself. You give up what you can't keep so that in the end you gain what you can never lose. This is what Paul meant when he said, "Whether by life or death."

Among the ruins of ancient Carthage there is an inscription carved by a Roman soldier:

"To laugh, to hunt, to bathe, to game—that is life."

I doubt if this is one of the soldiers that had the good fortune to be chained to a prisoner named Paul!

"For to me to live is to hunt, go to the baths, and party!"

It is the same today because most will fill in the blank of "For to me to live is ____" with anything but Christ. According to the tabloids and celebrity magazines, "for to me to live is" to fornicate, to accumulate, to dine well. Or on a more prosaic (everyday, ordinary) level, "for to me to live is" to golf, to work, to garden, to travel, to watch TV, to ski—to shop 'til I drop. Of course, if this be our life, then death is the loss of everything.

When Queen Elizabeth I, the idol of European fashion, was dying, she turned to her lady-in-waiting and said, "O my God! It is over. I have come to the end of it—the end, the end."

LET'S SUM UP THIS SECTION...

If for me to live is Christ, then to die is gain, but...

- If for me to live is money, then to die is to leave it all behind
- If for me to live is fame, then to die is to be forgotten
- If for me to live is pleasure, then to die is to miss all the fun
- If for me to live is ambition, then to die is to become insignificant
- If for me to live is possessions, then to die is to have them all rust and fade away

Alexander MacLaren describes how death can be a gain.

1. We lose everything we don't need – the world, the flesh, and the devil. We lose our trials, troubles, tears and fears.
2. We keep everything that matters – our personality, our identity, our fruit.
3. We gain what we never had before – heaven, rewards, the presence of God, fellowship with other believers.

HERE ARE 3 TOMBSTONE MARKERS THAT REVEAL DIFFERENT LIFE PHILOSOPHIES:

Here lies Lester Moore;
Four slugs from a .44,
No Les, no more.

That's bad theology for **Les** is still **more** somewhere, either in heaven or in hell.

Our second tombstone is from Montgomery, Alabama and reads:

Under the clover, and Under the trees,
Here lies the body of Jonathan Pease.
Pease ain't here, only the pod,
Pease shelled out and went home to God.

That's not bad theology.

There's another tombstone in Indiana with this epitaph:

Pause, Stranger, when you pass me by,
As you are now, so once was I
As I am now, so you will be,
So prepare for death and follow me.

An unknown passerby read those words and underneath scratched this reply:

To follow you I'm not content,
Until I know which way you went!

WHICH WAY WILL YOU GO WHEN YOU DIE?

What will death be like for you?

You can never say "To die is gain" unless you can also say "For to me to live is Christ."

If you cannot say "To live is Christ," how can you be sure that "to die is gain?"

(Source: [Pastor Brian Bell](#))

C. S. Lewis said "Aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither!"

APPLICATIONS:

- So how do you fill in the blank "To live is ____?"
- What is your passion in this short life?
- What are you aiming for?
- Are you living for heaven? If yes, how would you prove your answer if you were to evaluate the way you spend your time, money, and talents?
- Make a list of earthly things that might be keeping you from pursuing eternal priorities. Ask the Lord to focus your heart on heaven in such a way that you will have no regrets when you see Him face to face!
- Take some time to think about how you would feel if you knew this were your last day on earth. Who would you talk to? Would any of the items on your to-do list (YOUR "BUCKET LIST" as they call it) be worthwhile activities in light of eternity? Ask God by His Spirit to enable you to redeem the time for the days are evil (Eph 5:16) and to number your days so that you may present to your Lord a heart of wisdom (Ps 90:12), a life lived wisely and Biblically and in the power of the Spirit of Jesus and for His glory alone!
- If you chose eternal heavenly treasure over temporal earthly trinkets, you will have no regrets in time or eternity!

Philippians 1:22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.

The Christian's Vision: Being with Christ - Php 1:22-26

Paul's Dilemma - Php 1:22-23a

Paul's Desire - Php 1:23b

Paul's Decision - Php 1:24-26

How could Paul be so confident that he will be fruitful if he continues to live on earth? He was not relying on Paul but he One Who indwells Him, the Spirit of Christ Jesus. Paul as a Spirit filled man knows that if he keeps living in the physical flesh, the Spirit will bear fruit in his life. And so Paul expands upon the options of life or death. If he continues his sojourn on earth--"But if I live on in the flesh"--then he sees it as an opportunity to bear more fruit through his Gospel focused, Christ centered, Spirit filled ministry. Again we see Paul's strict singlemindedness (he had the mind of Christ)--he saw himself as an instrument for the unleashing of God's glory as long as time permitted (cf Acts 9:15, 20:24, 2 Ti 4:17). However, this unleashing would be a costly process--"fruit from my labor" so the prospect of leaving the battlefield and going home was appealing indeed. So appealing, in fact, that he adds, **Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell** (lit.--I do not know)."

ARE YOU SEEKING LIKE PAUL TO BE A SPIRITUAL FRUIT FARMER?

It helps to know what spiritual fruit (see [fruit - Gk = karpos](#)) is according to God's Word. Scripture describes 3 general kinds of **spiritual fruit** all of which yield an everlasting reward (Jn 15:16).

1) **Spiritual attitude fruit** – (GOOD ATTITUDE) As described in Galatians 5:22-23. Galatians 5:22-23 describes the **fruit of the Spirit, attitudes** of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. This spiritual attitude fruit precedes spiritual action fruit. If the spiritual attitudes are present, the fruit of good deeds will invariably follow.

2) **Spiritual action fruit** – (GOOD WORKS) In Colossians 1:10 Paul prayed for the saints to be filled with or controlled by the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that they might walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in all respects and bearing **fruit** in every **good work**.

3) **Spiritual converts** - 1 Co 16:15 "the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia"

The key to being a good “spiritual fruit farmer” is to abide in Jesus receiving the “sap” of the Spirit for as Jesus said...

FRUIT BEARING IS OUR JOB - “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and **appointed you** that you would go and **bear fruit**, and that **your fruit would remain**, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (John 15:16)

ABIDING IN CHRIST IS OUR NEED - “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who **abides** in Me and I in him, **he bears much fruit**, for apart from Me you can do nothing (ABSOLUTELY NOTHING OF ETERNAL VALUE). (John 15:5)

DEPENDING ON THE SPIRIT IS OUR POWER - It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

- **How do we abide in Jesus?** Sounds like a broken record but it is truth – Filled with His Word and Filled with His Spirit coupled with trust and obey.
- **What value do we place on producing fruit for Christ as opposed to our own comfort in living?**

Philippians 1:23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

We could title this verse PAUL'S [DILEMMA](#) – TO STAY OR GO and our subtitle might be THE LUST OF A GODLY MAN'S HEART, a phrase I will explain in a moment and which teaches us a powerful principle of how to fight the good fight of faith!

Here Paul further explains his dilemma of going home (to be with Christ) or to stay on the battlefield (do you see this world as a spiritual battlefield?).

HARD PRESSED ([sunecho/synecho](#)) – A great word picture as it was used of a traveler in a narrow passage with a wall of rock on either side. Paul feels “hemmed in by both directions to stay and to depart.

MY DESIRE - The word he uses for “**desire**” ([epithumia](#)) is the same word for “lust.” In fact, this is only one of the two times Paul uses this word in its noun form in a positive sense (1 Th 2:17 being the other). Thus we see one of the “lusts of a godly man's heart”--to be with Christ. In a very real sense Paul yearned for death in order that his union with Christ might be tasted and savored to the full. Is this the desire of our heart? It should be! It can be as we grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And as an aside, given our day of horrible internet trash and temptation for both men and women, Paul's mindset teaches us the powerful principle of the “**expulsive power of a new affection.**” (from [Thomas Chalmers' sermon by the same name](#)). In short, LUST to be WITH CHRIST effectively nullifies, neutralizes and makes ineffective the LUST OF THE FLESH to be with something or someone else, whether vicariously or literally!

Other Christians through the ages have also felt this same strong stirring in their breasts.

The great British evangelist [George Whitefield](#) said it this way...

“I go to my everlasting rest. My sun has risen, shone, and is setting--nay, it is about to rise and shine forever. I have not lived in vain. And though I could live to preach Christ 1,000 years, I die to be with him, which is far better.”

[Puritan Thomas Watson](#) said –

‘Spiritual things satisfy; the more of heaven is in us, the less earth will content us.... Fly aloft in your affections, thirst after the graces and comforts of the Spirit; the eagle that flies above in the air, fears not the stinging of the serpent; the serpent creeps on his belly, and stings only such creatures as go upon the earth’ (The Art of Divine Contentment).

BETWEEN THE TWO – To stay alive or to fall asleep in Jesus, which was in fact his desire, because that was FAR BETTER. - Note that Paul did not qualify this statement. It is simply **far better**...that anything!

DEPART - This Greek word ([analuō](#)) was used for striking a camp of the Roman legions or the pulling up of the anchor and sailing of a ship. When the Roman army set up camp, they would form a rectangle wall of brush as high as ten to twelve feet. When the soldiers departed and moved on, they left the make-shift fortress behind, a mute testimony that they had been there. When we go on to be with the Lord Jesus, we will leave our “mark,” our “stack of brush” so to speak! All that is not useful is left behind. All of the sin, selfishness, pain and anguish of the world are abandoned. We are freed from the cares of this world. Death in Christ is raising the anchor and setting sail for the shores of Heaven. Death for the Christian brings solutions and answers to earth's questions and

mysteries. Like a prisoner freed of his shackles, we are finally free of the burdens of our fleshly desires and the struggles and battles of this life.

The Gk word **depart** ([analuō](#)) means to unloose and was used of a ship being loosed from its moorings and allowed to sail back home. If God was finished unloading cargo through the apostle's life then Paul was keen to get back home. Death is a setting sail, a departure on that voyage which leads to the everlasting haven and to God. The reason is clearly given--" . . . and be with Christ, which is far better." This phrase should literally be translated, "much more better"; which intensifies the personal benefit he would experience. Indeed the joys and glories of heaven will thoroughly obliterate the heartaches and sorrows of earth in comparison. Ro. 8:17,18.

Ps 16:11 is apropos - "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Ps 16:11.

[Adoniram Judson](#) (missionary to Burma) said it well - "I am not tired of my work, neither am I tired of the world; yet when Christ calls me home, I shall go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from his school. Perhaps I feel something like the young bride when she contemplates resigning the pleasant associations of her childhood for a yet dearer home--though only a little like her, for there is no doubt resting on my future."

William Rutherford - Live in Christ, and you are in the suburbs of Heaven. There is but a thin wall between you and the land of praises. You are within one hour's sailing of the shore of the new Canaan.

ONE MORE POINT ABOUT THE STATEMENT "TO DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST" - This means that there is no such thing as "soul sleep" or a place of probation called purgatory. When a believer dies, he is ushered immediately into the presence of Christ. That's what Jesus said to the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." 2 Corinthians 5:8 makes the same point: "We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord." Spurgeon said "Death is the waiting room where we robe ourselves for immortality." I love what the famous evangelist [D L Moody](#) once said:

Some day you will read in the papers that [D L Moody](#) of East Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! At that very moment, I shall be more alive than I am now. (Amen!)

That reminds me of a young business owner who was opening a new branch office, and a friend decided to send a floral arrangement for the grand opening. Due to a mix-up at the florist, the card that was attached said, "Rest in peace." After complaining to the florist, the florist said, "Look at this way – somewhere a man was buried under a wreath today that said, "Good luck in your new location." We really do go to a new location when we leave this one, don't we? For the Christian, death is nothing more than a change of address.

WITH CHRIST – A little phrase we could easily overlook, but that would be to our loss. First note that Paul is saying when we die we are WITH CHRIST. Mark it down dear believer – when you die, you are WITH CHRIST. Beloved, we have absolutely no reason to fear death, for death is but a door into eternal life WITH CHRIST, a passage out of a prison and into a palace, an exchange of rags for a robe! Death may be the king of terrors, but Jesus is the King of kings!

The English translations miss a profound truth in the phrase **WITH CHRIST**. There are 2 words in Greek for "WITH", one ([meta](#)) meaning by the side of. The other word, the one Paul uses ([sun/syn](#) > "synergistic" "symphony") speaks of unhindered intimate union between us and our Lord Jesus Christ! No wonder Paul wants to depart and be with Christ for that is far better!

FAR BETTER – (Amplified = "FAR, FAR BETTER"; NAS = "VERY MUCH BETTER" because Paul piles up three comparative words (polus = "much" + mallon = "more" + kreisson = "better" – so literally "much more better!") Paul is expressing the highest superlative possible – while Scripture leaves much mystery about our life after death, this central, crucial truth is clear – when the believer dies he is WITH CHRIST and that state is unspeakably better than anything we can imagine now! This is truth you can count on dear believer. May this great truth transform our earthly oriented thinking into heavenly minded thinking! Do it for Thy glory Lord! Amen

- The more you look forward to heaven, the less you'll desire on earth.
- Remember that heavenly-minded people like Paul are those who do the most earthly good.
- To make the most of your time on earth, always keep heaven in mind.

Notice also that Paul did not compare his declaration with anything! In other words, he did not say "FAR BETTER THAN ____." He simply said far better -- The clear implication is that being WITH CHRIST is FAR BETTER than anything on earth, better than anything we could even imagine in our widest dreams!

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1Co 2:9 NLT)

There is no place like home—especially when home is heaven. Our heavenly home is our "real estate."

To see His face, this is my goal,
The deepest longing of my soul;
Through storm and stress my path I'll trace
Till, satisfied, I see His face!

ILLUSTRATION – ECLIPSE OF THE SUN (SON) - Solar eclipses are amazing for as the moon slides between the earth and the sun, the sun's brilliance gradually fades. Its light grows dim, as if there's a layer of dust on everything you see. The effect is most dramatic on a bright cloudless day. While the eclipse is in full force, it's easy to forget that the sun is still there in all its force and glory. As amazing as a solar eclipse may be, more amazing is the fact that as followers of Jesus we too often live with heaven eclipsed in our hearts. I don't know what you think of when you think of heaven, but count on it, heaven is a glorious destination and, as Paul described, because of Christ's presence there, it is far better than anything we could experience here (Philippians 1:23). But heaven's glory and the excitement of getting there often fades in the light of our dim view of heaven and the lure of lesser stuff here on earth.

APPLICATION:

- Pray and ask the Lord to keep the light of the Son ("S. O. N.") of heaven alive in your heart so that with eyes of faith you see Him continually with "20/20" spiritual vision!

ILLUSTRATION – SMUDGY WINDOWS - Joe Stowell tells this story - My friend Bud Wood is the founder of one of the finest homes in America for mentally challenged children and adults, ministering to many afflicted with Down's syndrome. The staff makes a concentrated effort to present the Gospel to these children and many have come to believe in Christ as Savior and in a heaven that will be their home. Bud told me that one of the major maintenance problems they have is dirty windows. I asked, "Why?" His answer surprised me!

"You can walk through our corridors any time of the day and you see these precious children standing with their hands, noses, and faces pressed hard against the windows, looking up to see if Christ might be coming back to take them home and make them whole."

APPLICATION:

- When was the last time you glanced heavenward (either literally or figuratively) anticipating that this might be that long-awaited day when we finally come face to face with Him Who is our FAR BETTER? Perhaps our lack of longing for heaven says something about our lack of earth-side fellowship with Him.
- Are there any "smudges on the windows" of your heart?

Philippians 1:24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

Notice that Paul's desire is to depart, but he dies to self for the sake of the saints in Philippi. And so Paul now explains why he should prolong his pilgrimage here on earth. God still has more cargo to unload to the Philippian believers through him. Paul is willing to temporarily forestall his desire (going home to be with Christ) in order to fulfill their need and to "finish (his) course and the ministry which (he) received from the Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:24)

- It's only when we're ready to die can we really live.
- Those who are most prepared to depart are most prepared to delay.
- When we die we leave behind all we have and take with us all that we are.

Dear believer you can mark this truth down -

"A Christian is immortal until his work on earth is done."

Think about that for a moment. Death cannot touch us until God is through with us. Why? "For we are His workmanship (masterpiece), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:10) When we have walked in the good works He prepared for us from the foundation of the world, He will say "Son/daughter, it's time to come. Well-done, My good and faithful servant."

Look at this way.

- Why are you and I still here?
- Why didn't God just take us home when we became believers?
- Because He has work He wants us to do!
- If you're a Christian, you'll go to heaven when you die so why not use your time here to get others ready to join you?

Philippians 1:25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,

Paul's purpose was the "progress" (prokope) of others. He wanted to help Christians on their journey to joy

A quote from **Henry James** could have been the comment on this verse for he said

"The best use of your life is to invest it in something that will outlast it."

Philippians 1:26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Paul is convinced he will continue with them for their progress (prokope) and joy in the faith, which is a description of sanctification or their continuing growth in Christlikeness. The question of whether Paul ever got to see them is not answered in Scripture. We'll find out in Heaven!

I will close with a quote from the Life Application Commentary –

Some people hold tightly to this life. Afraid to lose or let go, they in effect become slaves to their mortality. In contrast, those who do not fear death, seeing it merely as the door to eternal life, are free to live with purpose, meaning and commitment to a cause"

- We must avoid two errors. One is to work so hard that we lose sight of heaven.
- The other is to focus on heaven so much that we stop serving.

There is an old hymn This World is Not My Home that has good words to end this message on to live is Christ, to die is gain....

Lord, Oh Lord, I have no friend like You.
If Heaven's not my home, O Lord, what will I do?
Angels beckon me from Heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Over in glory land, there is no dying there,
The saints are shouting victory and singing everywhere,
I hear the voice of them that's gone on before,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

They're all expecting me, that's one thing I know,
I fixed it up with Jesus, a long time ago.
I know He'll take me through, though I am weak and poor,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

CAN I ASK YOU A SIMPLE QUESTION?

"Have you fixed it up with Jesus?"

You can never say "To die is gain" unless you can also say "For to me to live is Christ."

If you cannot say "To live is Christ," how can you be sure that "to die is gain?"

So let me ask it again "Have you fixed it up with Jesus?"

If you have not speak with the pastors or elders after the service for how to fix it up with Jesus.

ANOTHER CONCLUSION

In Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, Alice asks the Cheshire Cat, "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" The Cat replies, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." "I don't much care where--" says Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," says the Cat. "You're sure to get somewhere--if you only walk long enough."

- **Where do you want to get to?**
- **If you want to get to heaven, then you need to consider the question, "What am I living for?"**
- Complete the sentence: "For me, to live is ____." What? Money? Success? Happiness? Pleasure? Fun? Good times? Family? Self?
- If your answer is any of the above, then to die will be a terrible loss, not a gain.
- But if, with Paul, you can honestly say as you evaluate your life, "For me, to live is Christ," then you can also say with all the confidence of God's Word behind you, "to die is gain!"

FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY SEE IN DEPTH COMMENTARY

- [Philippians 1:18](#)
- [Philippians 1:19](#)
- [Philippians 1:20](#)
- [Philippians 1:21](#)
- [Philippians 1:22](#)
- [Philippians 1:23](#)
- [Philippians 1:24](#)
- [Philippians 1:25](#)
- [Philippians 1:26](#)

SERMON NOTES PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

SEVERAL TITLES ON PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

- THE FOUNDATION STONES FOR SPIRIT ENERGIZED UNITY
- ONE IN THE SPIRIT
- HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIPS
- UNITY THROUGH (CHRIST-LIKE) HUMILITY
- AN APPEAL TO THEIR CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE
- UNITY THROUGH HUMILITY
- UNITY THROUGH CONFORMITY
- CONFORMED TO UNITY

PRAYER

- Every Christian has the choice of being humble & being humbled. Lord You never crushed a soul that was laying prostrate at Your feet.

OUTLINE - Brian Bill

- Phil 2:1 **Fathom** the **Excellence** of what we have
- Phil 2:2-4 **Fulfill** the **Expectations** of what we must do

(a) **Resolve to pull together (Php 2:2).**

Strong appeal to unity.

(b) **Resist selfishness (Php 2:3a).**

"...but in humility consider others better than yourselves." This is a tough one because most of us secretly

believe that we're better than those around us and that our music preference should be prescribed for everyone. But humility is a prerequisite for unity. "To consider others better" is a mathematical term which means, "Think about it and come to a conclusion." We are to count what is really there, add it up, and find out what is true. A wonderful biblical example is found in Genesis 13 where we read that Abraham allowed Lot to choose whatever land he wanted. He thought more highly of his nephew than he thought of himself and verse 8 says Abraham did it for the sake of unity: "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers." When's the last time you specifically did something to avoid an argument?

(c) Remember the needs of others (Php 2:4) -

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." **Tolbook** is to fix one's attention on, with great interest in. Some of us need to take our eyes off ourselves and literally lift them to look at others.

ANOTHER OUTLINE - Jack Arnold

- Appeal for Unity - Php 2:1-2
- Appeal for Humility - Php 2:3-4

ANOTHER OUTLINE - Brian Bell

- 4 - Fold Incentive for Unity (Php 2:1)
- 4 - Fold Directive for Unity (Php 2:2)

Look at how the 4 Incentives (Php 2:1) link with the 4 Directives (Php 2:2).

[1] Since there is consolation in Christ - be like-minded.

[2] Since there is comfort of Love - having the same love.

[3] Since there is fellowship of the Spirit - being of one accord. {accord = "harmony of souls", souls that beat together in tune w/Christ & w/each other}

[4] Since there is affection & mercy - be of one mind. {like clocks that strike at the same time}

ANOTHER OUTLINE - Chris Benfield - Title - CONFORMED TO UNITY

1. Admonition for Unity (Php 2:1-2a)

- (a) The Lord we serve - consolation in Christ
- (b) The Love we Share - comfort of love
- (c) The Life we Live - fellowship of the Spirit
- (d) The Load we Bear (1) – if any bowels and mercies.

2. Attributes of Unity (Php 2:2-4)

- (a) Harmony - Php 2:2
- (b) Humility - Php 2:3
- (c) Hospitality - Php 2:4

(Source - has more detail under each point and subpoint - [Conformed to Unity](#))

ANOTHER OUTLINE - Adrian Rogers

I. The Motive for Unity

- A. Our Common Lord - Php 2:1a
- B. Our Common Love - Php 2:1b

- C. Our Common Life - Php 2:1c
- D. Our Common Load - Php 2:1d

II. The Method of Unity Phil 2:2-4

- A. Harmony
- B. Humility
- C. Helpfulness

III. The Model for Unity: The Mind of Christ - Phil 2:5-11

- A. The Mind of Voluntary Service
- B. The Mind of Vicarious Sacrifice
- C. The Mind of Victorious Significance

ANOTHER OUTLINE - J B Phillips - Paul's Approach to the Example of Christ (Php 2:1-4)

A) His Distress (Php 2:1-2a)

1) The Basis of His Appeal (Php 2:1)

First there is *the supreme basis* - "Consolation in Christ... comfort of love."

Second there is *the supernatural basis*: "Fellowship of the Spirit"—

Third there is *the supporting basis*: "Bowels and mercies"—

2) The Burden of His Appeal (Php 2:2) "Make my joy complete"

B) Their Discord (Php 2:2b-4)

1) The Need for Likemindedness (Php 2:2b)

2) The Need for Lowliness (Php 2:3)

The Cause of their Discords - Php 2:3a

The Cure for Their Discords (Php 2:3b)

3) The Need for Largeness (Php 2:4)

INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

An ad in the Lawrence, Kansas, *Journal-World*, purported: "**We will oil your sewing machine and adjust the tension in your home for only \$1.**" (In *Reader's Digest* [5/85], p. 190.) Who cares if they oil the sewing machine--if only someone could adjust the tension in our homes, I'll bet we'd all gladly pay \$100! We all crave harmonious relationships, but they seem to be a rare commodity. We enter marriage with high hopes for harmony: "This adorable creature I'm marrying is so easy to get along with! We're in love, so we won't have any serious problems!" But then a few months into reality, I discover that she's not quite as adorable as I had thought! In fact, she's got a few problems that I need to help her work on. One of her main problems is that she doesn't see things my way! As I seek to help her with her problems, I discover that she has another problem, namely, that she is stubborn and won't change.

We want harmonious relationships with our children, and yet the alienation between parents and their teenagers is proverbial. We want harmony in our church, but those people at church are so unloving! "Why, do you know what so-and-so said to me? I don't know who she thinks she is! After all the times I've helped her, and then she acts like that toward me! See if I ever do anything for her again!"

I'm glad that the Bible was written to real people with real problems. It doesn't paper over their problems and offer superficial answers. The church at Philippi was a good church, but it wasn't perfect. None is. If its first three converts were any gauge, it was a motley crew that gathered for worship in Philippi: a sophisticated, wealthy businesswoman; a career Roman military man; and, a former slave girl who had been into the occult. It was a built-in formula for conflict, and some tensions were surfacing among the members (Phil 4:2). So Paul gently urges them to work through their differences and he gives some principles for harmonious relationships that apply both to the church and to the home.

But, I'll warn you: It's a painful, difficult cure! Like chemotherapy, you may wonder at times if the cure is worth it. But it's the only cure

and if you don't take it, the disease will ultimately cause great suffering and result in death. Briefly stated, the principle is: The key to harmonious relationships is to put self to death and to regard others more highly than myself for Jesus' sake. (Source: Pastor Steven Cole)

Pastor Adrian Rogers - I want to talk to you about the thing that I want us to preserve perhaps more than any other thing except our orthodoxy—and that is our unity and our fellowship. The devil would love to divide this church, but I think one of the great marks of Bellevue Baptist Church is her unity and the wonderful, wonderful, glorious spirit of God that we feel when we come here together. The Bible calls that fellowship. It comes from the Greek word **koinonia**; it means, "to be of one mind and of one spirit."

There was a great basketball coach that many of you know about: Coach John Wooden. Coach Wooden was formerly the basketball coach at UCLA, and he, indeed, was a legend in his own time. And, somebody asked this coach, "Coach, what does it take to have a winning team?" Now, you would expect that he might give some great explanation or some convoluted answer, but his answer was so simple that it sounds simplistic. But yet, if you think about it, you can understand why he was such a great coach. He said, "There are three things that are essential to have a great team: number one—you must get the team into condition; number two—you must teach them to play together; and number three—you must teach them the fundamentals of the game." It's that simple. Get them in condition; teach them to play together; and teach them the fundamentals of the game.

Now, the Apostle Paul said that being a Christian is a lot like an athletic endeavor.

And, it takes exactly those three things that Coach Wooden said to make a great basketball team, to make a great coach, and to make a great church: number one—get the people in condition; number two—teach them to play together; and number three—teach them the fundamentals of the game. Or, if you'd like for me to put it in a little bit more spiritual language: get the folks sanctified (that's getting them into condition; number two—build a fellowship (that's teaching them to play together); and number three—do discipleship (that's teaching them how to play the game). Sanctification, fellowship, and discipleship will make a great church, will it not? Same three things, but we're just putting them, now, into spiritual language. Well, I want to take that middle word—that word of teaching them to play together, **unity**; or, if we want to use the spiritual term, fellowship—and I want us to think about this.

It seems that Paul had detected a slight flaw in this wonderful church, this church at Philippi. It seemed like that, perhaps, there was beginning to be just a little drift in the fellowship. For example, if you would look in 4:2: "I beseech Eudoiias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord" (Philippians 4:2). And, evidently, there were a couple of ladies here who were miffed at one another. And so, he said, "Now listen, ladies: Be of the same mind in the Lord." So, I want us to think a little bit about unity in the church, tonight.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2 - The apostle Paul was a menace to the devil. Satan did not know What to do with him. *Lock him up in prison, the evil one may have thought, and he will win his jailers to Christ and write letters that will influence the thinking of millions for ages to come. Set him free and he will win whole continents to Christ. Kill him and he will win a martyr's crown.* Paul's triumphant spirit rang out in the first chapter of Philippians as he pealed the bells of our joy in Christ. In the second chapter he introduced other triumphant figures into his letter. (John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Philippians: An Expository Commentary)

Adrian Rogers description of UNITY - – You know, there are three words that sound alike: one is **unity**; one is **union**; and one is **uniformity**. Now, it's **unity** that we're looking for, not **union**. Somebody has well said, "You can take two tomcats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline, and you have **union**, but you don't have **unity**." And, you can kind of conjure up that picture in your mind. We want more than **union**. We want to be more than wired together, or rusted together, or frozen together—that's **union**. And then, **uniformity**. What is uniformity? Uniformity comes from without—everybody saying the same thing, looking alike, and doing the same things. That **uniformity** comes by pressure from without. **Unity** comes from within, where we have the same Spirit and the same Lord. We're not brought together by rules. We're not brought together by threats. We are bound together by love of the Lord Jesus. And so, there's to be harmony. i

OPENING ILLUSTRATION ON HUMILITY - Dr. Harry Ironside was once convicted about his lack of humility. A friend recommended as a remedy, that he march through the streets of Chicago wearing a sandwich board, shouting the scripture verses on the board for all to hear. Dr. Ironside agreed to this venture and when he returned to his study and removed the board, he said "I'll bet there's not another man in town who would do that."

1. Our pride is as silly as the donkey that had Jesus on his back, thinking that they put garments & palm fronds on the ground for him!

2. Perspective: How to stay humble? Picture yourself as simply a kite in a hurricane. When Jesus is the hurricane, it's kinda hard not to fly!

Last Chapter - Good Ol Paul: Lock him up in prison - & he'll win his jailers to Christ & write letters that will influence the thinking millions for ages to come! Set him free - & he'll win whole continents to Christ! Kill him - & he'll win a martyr's crown! (Phillips)

This Chapter - Paul's goal here is Unity for the Philippian church.

To get Unity you need Humility! To get Humility, you need an Example...the best example is Jesus!

The words of Jesus from John 17:20-23: "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Ephesians 4:2-6: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" and verse 13: "Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

By way of background, the Philippian Church had very few problems. There was no doctrinal heresy or immoral conduct. However, if the Devil cannot reach Christians one way, he will try another. In the church at Philippi, there were some insipient forms of fighting and feuding among the congregation so that their testimony to the world was being hindered. In 1:27, Paul appeals to these Christians to stop wrangling and "stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel." Christian unity is not an option but a necessity if the local church is going to make an impact upon the world for Christ. NOTE: As much as we Christians intellectually know we should be striving for unity, many of us are not doing much about it. We somehow rationalize that our critical attitude is all right, our negative spirit is acceptable, and our gossip is not so bad as long as we are doing it against someone else but not he to us. Unity comes when there is one mind, one spirit, one heart and one bond in the gospel cause. Fighting within the local church destroys the power of Christ in the midst of His people, and the outside world mocks Christ because of the carnal actions of Christians.

H. A. Ironside used to tell a story that is appropriate to the rights question. When he was a boy of only eight or ten years of age, his mother took him to a business meeting of Christians. Two men were having a quarrel -- he didn't remember what it was about -- but one of them stood up and pounded on the desk and said, "I don't care what the rest of you do, all I want is my rights." sitting in the front row was a dear old Scottish man, somewhat hard of hearing, who cupped his hand behind his ear, leaned forward and said, "Aye, brother, what's that you say? What do you want?" The fellow said, "Well, I just said that all I want is my rights, that's all." And the old Scot replied, "Your rights, brother, is that what you want, your rights? If you had your rights, you'd be in hell. The Lord Jesus didn't come to get his rights, he came to get his wrongs. And he got them." The fellow who had been bickering stood transfixed for a moment. Then he sat down and said, "You're right. Settle it any way you like."

In Philippians 1:27 Paul makes a major shift in this letter, going from information to exhortation. Prior to this he has been explaining to the the worried saints at Philippi that prison has not hindered him, but to the contrary has provided and opportunity for the progress of the Gospel. Paul was imprisoned but as he wrote in 2 Ti 2:9 "word of God (Gospel) is not imprisoned." Prison became his pulpit for proclamation of Jesus. In fact in the first 26 verses Paul mentions Jesus or Christ some 15 times out of a total of 36 times in the entire letter. Clearly Paul's focus in prison was on the Person of Christ and as we have seen in the mnemonic for "J.O.Y." Philippians 2 then moves to the "O" of JOY - Others!

DEFINITION OF UNITY AND DISTINCTION FROM UNIFORMITY:

Unity - an undivided or unbroken completeness or totality with nothing wanting. The quality of being united into one. When there is unity, people are in agreement and act together for a particular purpose. The quality of being one in spirit and purpose. Harmony. We are to be like a symphony, composed of many different instruments, but all focused on one goal or purpose -- to create a beautiful sound to the hearer. The church is to be like that because the world is listening, and sadly they hear (and see) much disharmonious music coming from churches because of divisions and discord.

Unity is not uniformity. Think about this -- the word **Uniformity** has within it the word **uniform**. The idea then of that word is we dress alike, look alike, sound alike, think alike, act alike. But that is neither healthy nor biblical. **Unity** comes from deep within as Paul writes in Ephesians exhorting the church at Ephesus to be "diligent to preserve **the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. (Eph

4:3). It is the inner desire to conduct oneself in a cooperative manner, to be on the same team, to strive together for the same objectives, for the benefit of one another. Phil 1:27

That "one heart and mind and purpose" suggests unity, a genuine Spirit-filled unselfishness that breeds strength and spreads cheer. Is this suggesting **uniformity**? Does it mean we always have to agree on everything? Is that what harmony is all about? No. There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Uniformity is gained by pressure from without. As **Harry A. Ironside** said, "It is very evident that Christians will never see eye to eye on all points. We are so largely influenced by habits, by environment, by education, by the measure of intellectual and spiritual apprehension to which we have attained, that it is an impossibility to find any number of people who look at everything from the same standpoint. How then can such be of one mind? The apostle himself explains it elsewhere when he says, "I think also that I have the mind of Christ." ([1 Cor 2:16KJV](#)) The "**mind of Christ**" is the lowly mind. And, if we are all of this mind, we shall walk together in love, considering one another, and seeking rather to be helpers of one another's faith, than challenging each other's convictions."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- What types of attitudes threaten the unity and solidarity of our local assembly?
- Are we secure enough in our unity together that we can be aggressive in reaching out to others with the gospel and contending for the faith or are we primarily passive and focused on protecting ourselves?
- What difference is there between union and unity?
- Think of the parallel to a soccer team ... what types of attitudes make for a good player vs. a player who actually hurts the team?

Steven J. Cole [Philippians 2:1-4 Harmonious Relationships](#)

1. In any conflict, I need to look to my own relationship with Christ: Am I motivated by His great love (Php 2:1)?
2. In any conflict, I must look to my attitude: Am I seeking unity or am I seeking my own way (Php 2:2)?
3. In any conflict, I must look to my view of myself: Am I being selfish and conceited or humble (Php 2:3)?
4. In any conflict, I must look to my view of others: Am I putting their interests above my own (Php 2:4)?

A secular psychologist did a study in which he asked his subjects to list ten people he knew best and to label them as happy or not happy. Then they were to go through the list again and label each one as selfish or not selfish, using the following definition of selfishness: "A stable tendency to devote one's time and resources to one's own interests and welfare--an unwillingness to inconvenience one's self for others." The results showed that all of the people labeled *happy* were also labeled *unselfish*. He wrote that those "whose activities are devoted to *bringing themselves happiness* ... are far less likely to be happy than those whose efforts are devoted to making others happy" (emphasis in original, cited by Martin & Deidre Bobgan, *How to Counsel from Scripture* [Moody Press], p. 123).

The key to harmonious relationships is not to esteem self, assert self, or stand up for self. It is, rather, to put self to death and to regard others more highly than myself for Jesus' sake. If we would apply this to our homes and church, we would experience much more harmony and much less conflict. It's a painful cure; but it's the only cure given by God's Word of truth. ([Philippians 2:1-4 Harmonious Relationships](#))

PHILIPPIANS 2:1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

Other translations:

Amplified - Therefore if there is any encouragement *and* comfort in Christ [as there certainly is in abundance], if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship [that we share] in the Spirit, if [there is] any [great depth of] affection and compassion,

Barclay - If the fact that you are in Christ has any power to influence you, if love has any persuasive power to move you, if you really are sharing in the Holy Spirit, if you can feel compassion and pity,

The key to understanding this and other statements about love is to know that this love (the Greek word *agape*) is not so much a matter of emotion as it is of doing things for the benefit of another person, that is, having an unselfish concern for another and a

willingness to seek the best for another.

Encouragement in Christ

In Christ is a key Pauline doctrine, one that is intensely practical. When you see this phrase (**in Christ Jesus**) in many of Paul's uses, the first thought that should pop in your mind is your "union with the Lord." When the Father looks at you, He sees your "position" in His Son. You are in oneness with His Son Christ Jesus. You are in covenant with Jesus today and throughout eternity. Nothing can change that great truth. He is the Vine and we are the branches and just as His very life flows through us via His indwelling Spirit, we have the glorious potential to do everything in total dependence upon His power. This is a learning process, but it is our privileged position. In total dependence on the Spirit of Christ is the only way to life a supernatural life, a life on a "higher plane!" There is simply no possibility apart from practicing this simple phrase of "in the Lord" – don't want you to leave frustrated or discouraged ... what we are talking about is totally unrealistic and unattainable apart from being plugged into the Lord's grace and power and mindset and purposes

Examples of **in Christ** in Philippians

Php 1:1 - Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints **in Christ Jesus** who are in Philippi,

Adrian Rogers on fellowship of the Spirit - Look in Philippians 2:1: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any **fellowship of the Spirit**" (Philippians 2:1). There again, not only fellowship of the gospel, but koinonia of the Spirit. You say, "I feel like an outsider. I'm not a part of Bellevue. I don't have that warm fellowship." I'll tell you how to get it. Try some fellowship of the Spirit. Get a prayer partner. Get somebody that you meet with. Study the Word of God with that person. Get in a Sunday School class, and get somebody out of that Sunday School class, where you two get some people on your heart, and begin to pray for those people. Let the Spirit of God just melt you together. So many churches are wired together, or rusted together, or frozen together. They need to be melted together by the Holy Spirit. It's a fellowship of the Spirit. I'm going to tell you something else, dear friend. Two people who pray together are never, ever the same. There's something about it—I'll just guarantee it. If you say it's not true, you don't have a prayer partner. You just get a prayer partner. You get down on your prayer bones with somebody, and really begin to pray with them, and you're going to find out there is something called the koinonia of the Spirit.

Chris Benfield on Encouragement in Christ - That is very simple and yet strikingly profound. An awareness of the Lord should be reason enough to strive for unity among the church. We too have received great consolation from the Lord. He has been faithful to meet our needs and continually deals with us according to His grace and mercy. Our love for the Lord ought to create a burning desire to serve alongside fellow believers in unity. We cannot please our Lord apart from unity. He remained committed to the will of the Father, going all the way to the cross, bearing our sin and securing our salvation. There was no rebellion or lack of unity within Christ. That alone should motivate our unity!

b. The Love we Share (1) – If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love. Paul also mentions the comfort of love possessed by those in Christ. Here the word comfort speaks of "strength." Paul admonishes – if your love is strong, if it is real for one another, then unity will come natural. Those who share a common love, being strengthened by that love, would strive to maintain unity, and grow together! This presents a great challenge to the church today. I fear that far too many of our churches lack genuine love for one another. If our love is lacking, we will not possess unhindered unity. If our love is strong, and we are being strengthened through that love, we will possess unity. Our love for one another will dictate our lives and unity will be a natural by-product of our love. Genuine love will create an atmosphere of unity among the church. 1 John 4:11 – Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. John 15:12 – This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

c. The Life we Live (1) – If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit...Next Paul mentioned their fellowship in the Spirit. As believers they all shared the same Spirit, not a similar spirit, but they all possessed the Spirit within. Such a common bond would create a common fellowship through the Spirit and directly affect the lives they lived. With the Spirit abiding within, and guiding their lives, He would keep them united in fellowship. When one experienced pain, the others felt it too. When one rejoiced, the others were compelled to rejoice as well. As long as they walked in fellowship with the Lord, they would enjoy fellowship with one another. Sadly it doesn't always work this way because we tend to allow sin into our lives which clouds our vision and creates division, but I am thankful for the fellowship I have experienced within the church. As we walk in awareness of the Lord, focusing on our love for one another, the Spirit leads us according to the divine will of God. As we follow His lead, we enjoy fellowship with one another and great unity in the faith. We have the guidance and help necessary to possess continual fellowship and unity if we will follow the Spirit.

d. The Load we Bear (1) – If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies. Finally Paul deals with our compassion and care for one another. He refers to a phrase – bowels and mercies. This literally speaks of “our tender mercies for one another.” It deals with being so united in our zeal for the Lord and love for one another that we feel the hurts and burdens of fellow believers. When they are under a heavy load, we are compelled to come alongside them and help carry their load. It is motivated action generated by love. There are those outside the church who seek to help others when they are burdened, but this is amplified within the church. We are united within the family of God, being filled with the Spirit, and walking together in the faith. Such a close relationship creates a heart that is moved with tender mercies toward those who are struggling. I have experienced it many times in my life and witnessed such mercies being shown from you. When others hurt, we hurt; when they are under a heavy load, we feel the weight as well and want to lighten their load if possible. Gal.6:2 – Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. ([For full exposition see Conformed to Unity](#))

To paraphrase **Wiersbe**, the secret of **joy** in spite of circumstances (Chapter 1 Paul in prison) is maintaining a **single mind** (focused on Christ) and in Chapter 2 the secret of **joy** in spite of people is maintaining a **submissive mind**. In chapter 1 we find “**Christ first**” and in chapter 2 we see “**others next.**” Using “**J.O.Y.**” as an acrostic we see “**J**” for Jesus first, “**O**” for others next and finally “**Y**” for yourself last. A good order in order to maintain order but a “tall order” to carry out consistently. (cf Php 4:13 for how it is possible) Let this formula rule in your life (enabled by Php 2:13) and the “fruit” you will bear (Gal 5:22) will be supernatural “**J.O.Y.**”!

Every Christian, regardless of their praise preferences, has received these blessings. Paul's point is this:

Since you've been given all this, shouldn't you grant grace to others and do whatever it takes to promote peace and embrace unity?

PHILIPPIANS 2:2 **make** my joy **complete** by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Make my joy complete - this is a command (aorist imperative) which conveys the sense of urgency and can be rendered "Do this now!" "Don't delay!" "The need is urgent!" The spiritual **wealth** Paul reminds them of Philippians 2:1 calls for a "worthywalk" (same thing we say in Php 1:27). Our **spiritual privileges** call for appropriate **spiritual practice**. The **revelation** in 2:1 gives us the **responsibility** of Php 2:2-4. Remember that the only way to obey God's commandments (like make my joy complete) is by rejecting our tendency to do it in our natural strength and to learn to rely wholly on the Holy Spirit's supernatural power.

So Phil 2:1 gives "Four **reminders** of their **resources**". After telling the saints their spiritual resources, then Paul issues the command in Php 2:2. In essence Paul was saying in Php 2:1 these 4 items are the grounds on which you will be able to fulfill my command to make my joy complete.

When believers are not rejoicing in the Lord they will be marked by divisiveness, pride, and selfishness. To correct the situation, Paul issued a direct command: 'Fulfill ye my joy' (Php 2:2)."

- Phil 2:1 = How God sees us in Christ
- Phil 2:2-4 = How the world should see Christ in us

Joy - A good definition of joy is this: it's the flag that flies on the castle of the heart when the King is in residence.

What kind of church pleases God and man? A church where there is harmony, love and fellowship among the Christians. This can happen in a small church or a large church because it is a matter of attitude not circumstances.

A T Robertson on **being of the same mind** – (**Ed**: sumpsuche - makes me think of a symphony) “harmonious in soul, souls that beat together, **in tune with Christ and with each other**”

GREAT ILLUSTRATION OF FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT - **Adrian Rogers** elaborates on the tuning of instruments...

Now, we have a piano here, and we have a piano here. Those pianos ought to be in tune. And, Jim, I was listening this morning—they are; you'll be happy to know that. Those pianos ought to be in tune. Now, I don't know a lot about tuning pianos, but I've read this, and I believe it to be true: **that it is virtually impossible to tune one piano to another piano**. But, if you get a tuning fork, and tune that piano to the tuning fork, and tune

this piano to the tuning fork, do you know what happens? Ipso facto—they're in tune with one another—isn't that true? **When you're in tune with Jesus, and I'm in tune with Jesus, then, friend, you're going to be in tune with me, and I'm going to be in tune with you. I mean, that's what happens when we pray—we're seeking God together.**

(Ed: Bring a tuning instrument to show what happens to the sound of a piano or guitar that is out of tune! Now think about the "music" made by a local Body of Christ which is OUT OF TUNE! Instead of a "[symphony](#)" [a harmony of sounds!] it becomes a "[cacophony](#) [loud confusing disagreeable sounds]!" Woe!)

To have the "same love" gets to our feelings and our unconditional commitment to every Christian, whether we like them or not – and whether we like their music or not. To be "one in spirit and purpose" touches on how we relate to one another. The Greek is helpful here because this phrase literally means, "**same-souled.**"

Henry adds that we need to "be severe upon our own faults and charitable in our judgments of others, be quick in observing our own defects and infirmities, but ready to overlook and make favourable allowances for the defects of others. We must esteem the good which is in others above that which is in ourselves; for we best know our own unworthiness and imperfections.

Wiersbe sums up this section with the thought that "Paul is saying to the church, "Your disagreements reveal that there is a spiritual problem in your fellowship. It isn't going to be solved by rules or threats; it's going to be solved when your hearts are right with Christ and with each other." Paul wanted them to see that the basic cause was selfishness, and the cause of selfishness is pride. There can be no joy in the life of the Christian who puts himself above others.

Illustration We need to be a team

Lee Iacocca once asked legendary football coach Vince Lombardi what it took to make a winning team. The book Iacocca records Lombardi's answer: There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals and have plenty of discipline but still don't win the game. Then you come to the third ingredient: if you're going to play together as a team, you've got to care for one another. You've got to love each other. Each player has to be thinking about the next guy and saying to himself "If I don't block that man, Paul is going to get his legs broken. I have to do my job well in order that he can do his." The difference between mediocrity and greatness, Lombardi said that night, is the feeling these guys have for each other.

In the healthy church, each Christian learns to care for others. As we take seriously Jesus' command to "love one another," we contribute to a winning team.

-- Christopher Stinnett, Leadership Magazine, Vol. 15:3, Walled Lake, Michigan, Summer 1994, p. 49.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

NOTHING! - How many? Now just try to accomplish this relying on your own power! Flesh will not cast out flesh! We absolutely must depend on the Spirit's supernatural power to "do nothing...!"

The phrase "selfish ambition" means strife that comes from ugly self-promotion and a competitive spirit that destroys unity by dividing the church into groups and cliques. Selfishness and pride are at the root of every sin.

Paul doesn't promote **self-hate**, but advocates **self-forgetfulness!**

Illustration - Cross-country Drive

Four men are driving cross-country together: one from Idaho, one from Iowa, one from Florida, and the last one is from New York. A bit down the road the man from Idaho starts to pull potatoes from his bag and throws them out the window. The man from Iowa turns to him and asks, "What are you doing?" The man from Idaho says, "Man, we have so many of these darned things in Idaho. They're laying around on the ground, I'm sick of looking at them!" A few miles down the road, the man from Iowa begins pulling ears of corn from his bag and

throwing them out the window. The man from Florida asks "What are you doing that for?" The man from Iowa replies, "Man, we have so many of these darned things in Iowa. I'm sick of looking at them!" Inspired by the others, the man from Florida opens the car door and pushes the New Yorker out.

Many commentators feel that from the nature of Paul's exhortation (against selfishness) one can infer that there were budding factions among the saints at Philippi. In a gracious way, Paul is saying to the church, "Your disagreements reveal that there is a spiritual problem in your fellowship. It isn't going to be solved by rules or threats. It's going to be solved when your hearts are right with Christ and with each other."

D. L. Moody said, "Selfishness is tearing others down and vain conceit is building ourselves up."

J B Phillips on **with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves** - Paul was not saying that we should consider everyone else to be more gifted or more capable than we are. It is a false humility that depreciates any acknowledgment of one's gifts. C. S. Lewis showed that true humility is evident when a man who designs the most beautiful cathedral in the world—and knows it is the most beautiful cathedral in the world—would have been just as pleased if someone else had designed it (Screwtape's Letter XIV).

To pretend not to have abilities we know we do have is not humility, but hypocrisy. If we esteem others better than ourselves, we do not consider everyone else to be superior to ourselves, but we do want everyone else to have preferential treatment.

Humility is the opposite of conceit and selfish ambition. Humility is concern for the advancement of others. The man who reigns in the affections of God's people is not the bossy, pushy man, but the quiet, godly, unassuming man who is always seeking the good of other people. Barnabas was such a man. (The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Philippians: An Expository Commentary)

Humility of mind - Do you know how to forget others' faults? By remembering your own! Woe!

Humility you might say, "that's for weasels, I'm an eagle!" Then this quotes for you {"Eagles may soar,...but weasels aren't sucked into jet engines!"}

Here in Php 2:3 Paul gives us practical advice on how to integrate a Christlike Attitude into every day living.

[1] Never let selfishness or conceit be your motive!

[2] Regard others as more important than yourself.

- Php 2:3 deals w/our Attitude;
 - Php 2:4 deals w/our Actions!
-

Don't misinterpret what Paul is saying. His exhortation does not mean that we are to have a denigrating or disparaging view of our own gifts or talents. For example, you may be a much better singer than someone else. Paul is not saying to think of yourself as an inferior singer but to consider the other person as deserving of preferential treatment in general. The upshot is that our consideration for others must precede our concern for ourselves. You've probably seen the little acronym for "**joy**" - **J** (Jesus) **O** (others) **Y** (yourself).

The local church which pleases God must have a spirit of oneness, unity and harmony. This is a oneness around the gospel or the work of Jesus Christ. If all are submitted to Christ, there will be submission to one another. Paul is calling for unity of thought, unity of feeling, unity of Spirit and unity of purpose.

We have all heard the saying, "Idle hands are the Devil's tools." This can apply to spiritual activity as well. Christians soaking in God's Word and not giving it out will become the Devil's tool, for they will develop a stagnate and critical attitude. Christians should be very active in spiritual works such as praying studying the Bible, teaching, visiting, witnessing and socializing.

Empty conceit (**kenodoxia** from **kenos** = empty, vain, hollow, groundless + **doxa** = glory, praise or opinion) is used only here in the NT and literally means "vain glory", "empty praise" or "hollow opinion" all describing in essence something which has an appearance but lacks the reality. It is a graphic description of the glory this world affords us which to the natural man appears "beautiful" and desirable, but which is literally devoid of any good or any eternal value. Kenodoxia describes the person who is

conceited without reason, deluded, ambitious for his own reputation, challenging others to rivalry, jealous himself and willing to fight to prove his idea is right.

The idea of **kenodoxia** includes a highly exaggerated self-view. It is a passion for empty personal glory which contrasts sharply with **humility**.

Illustration - Merv Griffin and the body builders – what do they do with all that muscle?

One afternoon on the Merv Griffin Show, years ago, Merv interviewed some body builders. Merv was standing there, looking at those guys who had muscles on their muscles, and he asked the obvious question, "What do you use all these muscles for?" One guy answered by flexing his muscles in a typical body-building pose. Merv, taken back by the response, replied "You don't understand me. I asked, what do you use all those muscles for?" The same guy said, "Here, I'll show you." And he posed again for the camera. For the third time Merv asked the question again. He was obviously growing irritated. "No, No. You still don't understand my question. Read my lips. What do you use those muscles for." And for a third time the guy posed again. -- Tim Hansel, Holy Sweat, p. 26-27.

Be careful when you find yourself seeking attention. Attention really doesn't do that much for you. It's just something to show off. - [Rich Cather](#)

Wuest on humility of mind "The word is used in an early secular manuscript of the **Nile River at its low stage**, "It runs low." Expositors defines it: "the lowliness of mind which springs from a true estimate of ourselves—a deep sense of our own moral smallness and demerit."

John gives us a good pattern in Jn 3:30 "He must (present tense - continually) increase, but I must (present tense - continually) decrease." The order is important for as we see Jesus higher and higher we get a proper perspective of our self. True humility is not putting ourselves down but rather lifting up others. If we concentrate on lifting up others, putting down ourselves will take care of itself. As we go through life exalting Christ and others, then genuine humility will be inevitable. If we exalt ourselves then God will take care of our humiliation for He promises to humble the proud. It is much less painful to do it the first way. The true way to be humble is not to stoop until you are smaller than yourself, but to stand at your real height against some higher nature that will show you what the real smallness of your greatness is. Humility is not simply feeling small and useless—like an inferiority complex. It is sensing how great and glorious God is, and seeing myself in that light.

Illustration - Key to unity - humility

R.C. Chapman, a pastor and teacher back in 19th century England, wrote a book called "Agape Leadership". He has a couple of great quotes about "unity":

"Pride nourishes the remembrance of injuries: humility forgets as well as forgives them."

"When mutual intercession takes the place of mutual accusation, then will the differences and difficulties of brethren be overcome."

"Humility is the secret of fellowship, and pride the secret of division". - [Rich Cather](#)

Illustration - regard one another as more important - Honor others Leave your crown at home.

At a reception honoring musician Sir Robert Mayer on his 100th birthday, elderly British socialite Lady Diana Cooper fell into conversation with a friendly woman who seemed to know her well. Lady Diana's failing eyesight prevented her from recognizing her fellow guest, until she peered more closely at the magnificent diamonds and realized she was talking to Queen Elizabeth! Overcome with embarrassment, Lady Diana curtsied and stammered, "Ma'am, oh, ma'am, I'm sorry ma'am. I didn't recognize you without your crown!" "It was so much Sir Robert's evening," the queen replied, "that I decided to leave it behind."

Illustration

President Reagan used to have a sign on his desk that read: "There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go if he doesn't mind who gets the credit." - [Rich Cather](#)

Selfishness kills relationships It's what separates marriages.

Illustration

A reader of People Magazine wrote a letter to the editor about actor Kevin Costner's plans for divorce from his wife Cindy after 16 years of marriage. She wrote: Kevin is quoted as saying, "I wish I could stop and raise my family, but this is my time." Poor Kevin. When was Cindy's time? When she helped him form his career, when she had his three kids, or when she raised them by herself?

-- Sally Wood, People Magazine, November 28, 1994, p. 6.

God wants to stretch our hearts, not shrink them.

Illustration

The widest thing in the universe is not space; it is the potential capacity of the human heart. Being made in the image of God, it is capable of almost unlimited extension in all directions. And one of the world's greatest tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little besides ourselves. -- A.W. Tozer in The Root of the Righteous. Christianity Today, Vol. 34, no. 3. - [Rich Cather](#)

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones - The way to become poor in spirit is to look at God.

Andrew Murray quipped that "The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself; he simply does not think of himself at all! Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it.

Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it! The truly humble person knows himself and accepts himself (Ro 12:3-[note](#)). He yields himself to Christ to be a servant, to use what he is and has for the glory of God and the good of others. "**Others**" is a key idea in this section as the believer's eyes are turned away from himself and focused on the needs of others.

ILLUSTRATION - Think of others

The greatest illustration of this is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He thought more of our needs than His own.

He saw that we needed someone to deal with our sin, and He stepped in and paid the price by dying on the cross in our place.

It's actually a very healthy thing for us.

Illustration -

Years ago, Dr. Karl Menninger of the Menninger Clinic was asked, "If someone felt a nervous breakdown coming on, what would you suggest that he do?" "If you feel a nervous breakdown coming on, I would urge you to find somebody else with a problem—a serious one—and get involved with that individual, helping him solve his problem." In helping him to solve his problem, then in reality your own problem is going to disappear. You're no longer thinking internally. You're no longer letting things gnaw at your stomach. You're no longer getting disturbed about yourself because you're not thinking about yourself. You're thinking about others. I don't know what your objective in life might be, but there is something each one of us can do.

I think this is one of the keys to a healthy marriage, learning to think more of the other person's needs than of your own. [Rich Cather](#)

Illustration - Dr. Willard Harley in his book entitled His Needs, Her Needs points out the priorities of the sexes in the order of importance:

A man desires:

1. Sexual fulfillment
2. Recreational companionship
3. An attractive spouse
4. Domestic support

5. Admiration of his wife

A woman desires:

1. Affection
2. Conversation
3. Honesty and Openness
4. Financial Support
5. Family Commitment

I find it interesting that none of the “needs” on “his list” are the same as the “needs” on “her list”. If these were your spouse’s needs, how well are you doing at meeting them? What do you think your spouse would say? These may not be your spouse’s exact needs, but do you know what your spouse’s needs are? We must learn to understand each other’s needs and work to meet those needs. - [Rich Cather](#)

It should also be remembered that the minds of different believers are not to be pressed into a single mold of thinking--this is not what is meant by being "likeminded" (Phil. 2:2).

Rather, God imparts to us the matchless mastermind of Christ, so each believer will be a distinct person in himself.

Believers will be likeminded inasmuch as they will seek to reach similar goals, but they will not each seek the same way, and they may not always agree as to how a particular goal can best be reached.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19).

**Christ's solution for pride is the only cure:
consider others better than ourselves.**

HUMILITY - The word “humility” really means “lowliness of mind.” In lowliness of mind, Christians are to consider others better than themselves. How do we interpret the thought of “better?” Obviously, some Christians are smarter than others, some are more educated than others, some are more talented than others. Are we to ignore these facts? No, because Paul is talking about “importance.” The NASB translates this, “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each one regard one another as more important than himself.” We are to view every other Christian as more important to the body of Christ than we are. It is very difficult to say, “That person is better than me” when he may not be in various ways, but we can say, “That person’s interests are more important than mine.” NOTE: Each Christian must realize that all he has is by the grace of God and if he is in any way superior to another Christian, it is all God’s doing (*1 Cor. 4:7: For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?*). Each Christian is to think of himself as the least important Christian in the church. This is what real humility is. Humility is not, “Ah, shucks, I’m really nothing. I’m nobody. I’m a worm.” NOTE: A mind of humility is giving up personal rights and wants for the rights and wants of others. So often we hear Christians say or imply, “I have my rights and I’m going to cling to my rights no matter what any other Christian does or says!” That is not a mind of humility.

Unselfish - who comes to mind when you here that word? Maybe this “unknown man in the water” from 1982. As disasters go, this one was terrible but not unique, certainly not among the worst on the roster of U.S. air crashes. There was the unusual element of the bridge, of course, and the fact that the plane clipped it at a moment of high traffic, one routine thus intersecting another and disrupting both. Then, too, there was the location of the event. Washington, the city of form and regulations, turned chaotic, deregulated, by a blast of real winter and a single slap of metal on metal. The jets from Washington National Airport that normally swoop around the presidential monuments like famished gulls were, for the moment, emblemized by the one that fell; so there was that detail. And there was the aesthetic clash as well—blue-and-green Air Florida, the name a flying garden, sunk down among gray chunks in a black river. All that was worth noticing, to be sure. Still, there was nothing very special in any of it, except death, which, while always special, does not necessarily bring millions to tears or to attention. Why, then, the shock here? But the person most responsible for the emotional impact of the disaster is the one known at first simply as “the man in the water.” (Balding, probably in his 50s, an extravagant mustache) He was seen clinging with 5 other survivors to the tail section of the airplane. This man was described by Usher and Windsor as appearing alert and in control. Every time they lowered a lifeline and flotation ring to him, he passed it on to another of the passengers. “In a mass casualty, you’ll find people like him,” said Windsor. “But I’ve never seen one with that commitment.” When the helicopter came back for him, the man had gone under. His selflessness was one reason the story

held national attention.

Rich Cathers on Becoming “other” centered. - The sad thing about marriage counseling is that you rarely ever get to talk to people who are having a happy marriage. Instead, you always get to talk to people who are having trouble in their marriage.

One of the common things that I come across whenever there is conflict is that usually one or both parties are thinking strictly about their own needs.

If I ask a husband and a wife to write down what they think they need in a marriage, they can fill up a couple of sheets of paper with their own needs. But if I ask them what their partner needs in the marriage, there is usually a lot of silence and scratching of the head.

Do you know what the needs of your partner are? Do you REALLY know, or would your list of things just be what you hoped they would be?

For example, husbands, what would you say your wife’s needs are? Would you tell me that she has this great need to cook you a great supper every night, to have it ready when you come home from work, that she needs to greet you with a great big wet, juicy kiss and just stare silently at you with goo-goo eyes all night while you watch football? Those might be some of your wife’s needs, but more likely they’re just your needs.

If we played that old “Newlywed Game”, and I had each of you make up a list of what the wife’s needs were in a marriage, would your two lists agree at all? How about the husbands needs?

This is much great than just dealing with marital problems. Paul is talking about people in the church getting along with each other.

When you have a conflict with any other person, how often do you stop and think to yourself, “What is that person needing right now?”

Rich Cathers on Put others ahead of you. Think of others first.

It goes against our nature to think of others. We all tend to be by nature very selfish people. We tend to be mostly concerned about one person – “me”.

They say that if you want to be successful in learning to carry on a conversation with another person, just learn to get them to talk about themselves. Ask them to tell you all about themselves.

Yet doing this is pretty hard, especially when you want to be talking about yourself!

God wants us to be concerned for the other person and not just thinking about what we’re going to get out of a relationship.

Illustration

A story is told of Jesus and His disciples walking one day along a stony road. Jesus asked each of them to choose a stone to carry for Him. John, it is said, chose a large one while Peter chose the smallest. Jesus led them then to the top of a mountain and commanded that the stones be made bread. Each disciple, by this time tired and hungry, was allowed to eat the bread he held in his hand, but of course Peter’s was not sufficient to satisfy his hunger. John gave him some of his.

Some time later Jesus again asked the disciples to pick up a stone to carry. This time Peter chose the largest of all. Taking them to a river, Jesus told them to cast the stones into the water. They did so, but looked at one another in bewilderment.

“For whom,” asked Jesus, “did you carry the stone?”

One of the scary things about selfishness is to think that others are watching me and copying me.

Illustration

There’s a story told of a pastor who was officiating at a funeral. When he was done, he was asked to lead the funeral procession as it made its way to the cemetery. So he got into his car, and he started driving at the head of the funeral procession. He flipped on his radio and became preoccupied, lost in thought; he forgot where he was going. About that time, he passed a K-Mart and thought about something he needed to pick up.

So he turned into the parking lot. As he was looking for a parking space, he just happened to glance into the

rear-view mirror—and saw a string of cars following, all with their lights on! So self-absorbed, and then so humbled.

-- Mary Graves, "Getting Sober for Christmas," Preaching Today, Tape No. 135.

Are there people following your example? Jesus gave us the example that we ought to follow.

Pastor Brian Bill on Humility - Humility - tough subject.

1. I don't claim to be there, nor as having been there.
 2. So like Paul, I'll use Jesus as our example this evening.
 3. Let's commit to Pursue humility together; Practice humility together; Grow in Humility together.
 4. We cannot attain full Humility here. The best we can say is, "as a proud person I am pursuing humility."
 5. Augustine said, Pride is the mother of all sin. It is pregnant w/all sin. a) Pride is the root sin that leads to the fruit of sin.
 6. Conversely then Humility is the mother of all Joy!
-

SOME QUOTES ON HUMILITY

- Humility is to the Christian what ballast is to the ship; it keeps him in his proper position and regulates all his thoughts and feelings.
 - Swallowing of pride seldom leads to indigestion.
 - The easiest way to dignity is humility.
 - God can only fill valleys, not mountains. (Think of filling with His Spirit)
 - If we learned humility it might spare us humiliation.
 - The lowliest Christian is the loveliest Christian.
 - The true secret of spiritual strength is selfdistrust and deep humility. J. C. Ryle
 - It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels. - Augustine
 - Humble hearts lie in the valleys where streams of grace are flowing, and hence they drink of them. C. H. Spurgeon
 - The higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem. C. H. Spurgeon
 - Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility. Jonathan Edwards
 - All God's thrones are reached by going downstairs. C. Campbell Morgan
 - Not until we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty ... acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts, and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours. J. I. Packer
 - I sometimes think that the very essence of the whole Christian position and the secret of a successful spiritual life is just to realize two things ... I must have complete, absolute confidence in God and no confidence in myself. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones
 - Think as little as possible about yourself. Turn your eyes resolutely from any view of your influence, your success, your following. Above all speak as little as possible about yourself. Samuel Wilberforce
-

APPLICATION

"Ambition" - You may get to the very top of the ladder and find it has not been leaning against the right wall.

Q: Do these 2 verses go against our natural tendencies?

Q: How do they go against the spirit of society?

WOULD MAKE A GOOD CLOSING ILLUSTRATION - DO WE HAVE AS MUCH SENSE AS BIRDS? (We often hear the term "bird brain" - well, here is a story that counters that statement! It's called Geese Sense! **"Why the V formation?"**)

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. (If we have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed the same way we are going.) When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the wing and another goose flies point. The geese honk from behind

to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. (What do we say when we honk from behind?) Finally, when a goose gets sick, or is wounded by a shot and falls out, two geese fall out of formation and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly, or until he is dead, and then they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their original group.

ILLUSTRATION - When **F. B. Meyer** pastored Christ Church in London, Charles Spurgeon was preaching at Metropolitan Tabernacle, and **G. Campbell Morgan** was at Westminster Chapel. Meyer said, "I find in my own ministry that supposing I pray for my own little flock, 'God bless me, God fill my pews, God send me a revival,' I miss the blessing; but as I pray for my big brother, Mr. Spurgeon, on the right-hand side of my church, 'God bless him'; or my other big brother, Campbell Morgan, on the other side of my church, 'God bless him'; I am sure to get a blessing without praying for it, for the overflow of their cups fills my little bucket."

ILLUSTRATION - The opposite of **humility of mind** is illustrated by the story of the young Scottish minister who walked proudly into the pulpit to preach his first sermon. He had a brilliant mind and a good education and was confident of himself as he faced his first congregation. But the longer he preached, the more conscious everyone was that "the Lord was not in the wind." He finished his message quickly and came down from the pulpit with his head bowed, his pride now gone. Afterward, one of the members said to him, "If you had gone into the pulpit the way you came down, you might have come down from the pulpit the way you went up."

Below are six ways to encourage someone - When was the last time you encouraged someone in any of the following ways? Have you ignored some gentle promptings by the Spirit to encourage someone? Perhaps today you might ask God to whom you might send a note or make a call? Yes, dear brother or sister in Christ, it does cost to encourage another (eg, it always costs our time, our "agenda", etc), but it might just be the most wisely invested moment of your day!

- 1) Provide materially – meet their material needs.
 - 2) Drop a line – send notes of encouragement.
 - 3) Reach out and touch – give an appropriate touch such as a pat, hug, etc.
 - 4) Listen up – listen actively. (Oh my, I need to heed this one!)
 - 5) Empathize – comfort others in their pain.
 - 6) Give of your time – give your undivided attention.
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ILLUSTRATION - After being married for over 50 years, a man revealed the secret to his successful marriage. He said, "Well, the wife and I had this agreement when we first got married. When she was bothered about something, she jus' tell me and git it off her chest. And if I was mad about somethin', I was to take a long walk. I 's'ppose you could attribute our successful marriage to the fact that I have mostly led an outdoor life." This man was committed to unity!

If we are looking after the interests of others, we would have very few conflicts. What is strife? It is conflict of interests. Two parties wanting their rights, their way, their desires, their goals. Why conflict in the local church? Because Christians are doing their own thing which ultimately results in a spiritual collision. We cannot collide with another Christian if we put his interests first. NOTE: Each Christian has the same position before God, each is loved equally by God and each is equally precious to God. Christians differ only in personality, cultural status and IQ. But, even these are from God, so we can't boast about them. God wants us to use these things to glorify Him and to serve others. We are basically what we are and that cannot be changed. Our personality can be refined and mellowed by the Holy Spirit but not changed. NOTE: Christians also differ in spiritual gifts and each Christian needs the gift of the other Christian. One time I heard a man speak and he opened his sermon with the words, "Every Christian is in some way my superior." That hit me like a ton of bricks, for it is true. Every other Christian has something to teach me. (Jack Arnold)

NOTHING THROUGH SELFISH AMBITION - The aquatic creature called the blowfish has no particular value to the one who catches it—except that it may help to develop the angler's patience because it often seizes bait intended for better fish. The blowfish is unattractive; it has a large mouth and a wrinkled body that looks like worn-out leather. When you turn it over and tickle it, the flabby fish puffs up until it is swollen like a globe.

People can be like that. A little flattery, a little tickling of their vanity and they swell up, giving the semblance of greatness. Pride inflates them, and they puff up like the blowfish. But there's nothing substantial about them; they are all air.

This condition takes other forms with more serious consequences. For example, the Christians to whom Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 5 were tolerating immorality. Instead of being grieved over sin in their midst, they were actually "puffed up" (1Cor 5:2). Here was a sure sign of carnality and immaturity—they were proud when they should have been mourning. God desires that we be "built up" in Christ—never "puffed up" with pride.

The continual attitude of God's children should be the one Paul recommended to the Philippians. He said, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" ([Phil. 2:3](#)). If we take this seriously, we won't have the characteristics of the puffed-up blowfish. —P. R. Van Gorder

The smaller we become, the more room God has to work.

Running For Others - Tom Knapp never won a race during his entire high school track career. Tom was a "pusher." It was his task to set the pace for his fellow team members, who would then beat him to the finish line. When he ran a successful race, he was enabling a fellow teammate to win. Even though Tom never had enough reserve energy for the final sprint to victory, the coach considered him a valuable member of the team.

In a similar way, the New Testament tells us to run our race of faith with the success of others in mind. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3, 4). Our example of such living is Jesus Christ, who left the glory of heaven to share our humanity and die on the cross so that we can have eternal life (Php 2:5-8).

If the encouragement of our example helps another person to flourish and be successful, we should rejoice. When the eternal prizes are awarded for faithful service to God, a lot of "pushers" will be wearing blue ribbons. Until then, let's keep running so that others can win. —David C. McCasland

Oh, to see the needs of others
More important than our own,
Following our Lord's example
When He left His heavenly throne. —Sper

You can't lose when you help others win

GAIN BY GIVING - "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."-- Proverbs 11:25

A visitor to a lighthouse said to the keeper, "Aren't you afraid to live here with the storms and high winds constantly lashing the walls?"

"Oh, we have to be more concerned about those out on the sea," the man replied. "We think only of having our lamps burning brightly and keeping the reflectors clear so that those in greater danger may be saved."

We too are to be more concerned about others than we are about ourselves (Phil. 2:3, 4). Generosity and selflessness produce an abundant life of joy and rich reward. According to the Scriptures, if we give freely to others, we will receive abundant blessing.

Proverbs 11 teaches that a person who gives to others will gain even more (Pr 11:24, 25). Pr 11:25 paints a word picture to make the point. It states that "he who waters will also be watered himself."

EACH year a small number of baseball superstars think they aren't being properly appreciated by their teams' owners. They are dissatisfied with their salaries even though they make more money in one year than most of us do in a lifetime. Their discontent is based on comparison. Each player considers him-self the best at his position and therefore thinks he should receive the largest salary.

Before the advent of multimillion dollar sports contracts, C. S. Lewis made this insightful, almost prophetic, comment: "We say that people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better looking than others. If everyone else became equally rich, or clever, or good-looking, there would be nothing to be proud about."

Pride afflicts all of us, not just the rich and famous. It is pride that causes us to feel hurt when someone snubs us, ignores us, or takes credit for something we did. Pride is behind the envy we feel toward people who are more successful than we are.

Christ's solution for pride is the only cure: consider others better than ourselves.

PHILIPPIANS 2:4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Matthew Henry - a selfish spirit is destructive of Christian love. We must be concerned not only for our own credit, and ease, and safety, but for those of others also; and rejoice in the prosperity of others as truly as in our own. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, and make his case our own

Edwards observes "What hard words these are! Our souls know they are true but plead with us not to take them seriously. If we followed these injunctions it appears that all we hold precious would be thrown out the window. After all, if we no longer exalted ourselves then who would there be to exalt us? And if we lived only for the benefit of others, who would watch out for us? Our problem is that we want to be called a "living sacrifice" without dying on the altar of servanthood."

John Phillips on Php 2:4 - To seek one's own advancement is worldly. To seek the prosperity, good, and promotion of others is divine. Philippians 2:4 expresses the essence of the spirit of the Lord Jesus. Those who heed these words of Paul have the larger view of life. The view that seeks one's own things tends to narrowness, selfishness, bigotry, smallness, and meanness of soul. The view that seeks to promote the interests and well-being of others leads to largeness of life both here and hereafter.

Lot sought to promote his own interests when he chose the well-watered plains of Jordan. How shortsighted he was in his selfish desire to take the best and most fertile part of the country for himself. God could already see those green valleys and prosperous cities buried in salt and sulfur, a smoking ruin of desolation. Lot lost fortune and family in Sodom and almost lost his faith; certainly he lost his testimony.

All the land of Canaan had been deeded by God to Abraham, yet that noble unselfish servant of God simply stood there saying, "We be brethren," while Lot took what looked like the best. But when the separation was accomplished, who was the bigger man? Who was marked by largeness of heart?

And Abraham did not lose anything because of his largeness. Lot journeyed *east* and once his caravan had gone over the hill and down into the valley toward those well-watered plains, God spoke. He said to Abraham, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, *and eastward*, and westward: For *all* the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Genesis 13:14-15, italics added).

All the comments in Philippians 2:1-4 are merely Paul's approach to the example of Christ. Php 2:5-11 present the example itself, by far the greatest example of all. (The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Philippians: An Expository Commentary)

John Phillips - To seek one's own advancement is worldly. To seek the prosperity, good, and promotion of others is divine. Philippians 2:4 expresses the essence of the spirit of the Lord Jesus. Those who heed these words of Paul have the larger view of life. The view that seeks one's own things tends to narrowness, selfishness, bigotry, smallness, and meanness of soul. The view that seeks to promote the interests and well-being of others leads to largeness of life both here and hereafter. ii

Are you looking out for the interests of others? A young nurse's story illustrates Paul's point...

"During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions, until I read the last one: 'What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?' Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50's, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. Absolutely, said the professor. "In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello". I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy." Who is the "Dorothy" in your life who needs your attention?

Others, Lord, yes, others,

Let this my motto be;

Help me to live for others,

That I might live like Thee.

— Charles D. Meigs

Love Speaks Loudest - Missionary Doug Nichols was a patient in a tuberculosis ward in India in 1967. Patients and staff saw him as a rich American taking up space in their hospital. Their hostility was evident as they refused the gospel tracts he offered them.

One morning at 2 o'clock, a very sick Indian man struggled to get out of bed to go to the bathroom, but he was too weak to make it. Soon the stench from his bed filled the room. Other patients yelled at him. Nurses showed their anger for having to clean up the mess. One slapped him.

The next night the old man tried again to get up, but again fell backward. He began to cry. Doug, weak himself, went over, picked him up, and carried him to the bathroom and back to his bed.

What a change came over that hospital ward! One patient gave Doug a steaming cup of Indian tea, motioning that he wanted a tract. Nurses, interns, and doctors asked for booklets or gospels of John. And several eventually received Christ.

What changed their attitude? Doug had exemplified the Savior, who "made Himself of no reputation" but took "the form of a bondservant" and "humbled Himself" (Phil. 2:7, 8).

We are called to do the same. Sometimes loving is unpleasant, but that's when it speaks the loudest. --D J De Haan

Add to your believing, deeds that prove it true--
Knowing Christ as Savior, make Him Master too;
Follow in His footsteps, go where He has trod,
In the world's great trouble, risk yourself for God. --Leech

Love without action is not love.

CONCLUSIONS:

The key to harmonious relationships is not to esteem self, assert self, or stand up for self. It is, rather, to put self to death and to regard others more highly than myself for Jesus' sake. If we would apply this to our homes and church, we would experience much more harmony and much less conflict. It's a painful cure; but it's the only cure given by God's Word of truth.

Adrian Rogers on unity in the Church - Philippians 2:1-11

I. The Motive for Unity

And, I want us to think, first of all, of the motive for unity in our church. Why should we at Bellevue Baptist Church strive with all of our hearts to preserve this unity? Let me give you four reasons for unity that come right out of this passage. I'm in Philippians 2, and look in verse 1: "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).

A. Our Common Lord

Now, let's just stop there and say, "What is the motive for unity?" Number one: our common Lord. He says: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ..." That literally means—the word consolation means—"encouragement." "If there's any encouragement that comes from God." And, he's saying if; he's not saying like "there may be or there may not." That word if may be translated "since." "Since the Lord Jesus encourages us"—that's what he's saying—"Since the Lord Jesus encourages us, then we are to be of the same mind." It is Jesus, not Paul, who is encouraging Bellevue Baptist Church to be of the same mind.

And, any disunity is disloyalty to Jesus Christ. Do you believe that? If we do not love one another, then it is because we do not properly love the Lord Jesus. The highest motivation for unity in our church is not because of our reputation, not because of the congregation, and not because of the denomination; it is because of Jesus. So, here's the first reason for this reason. Here's the first motive: our common Lord. His name is Jesus.

B. Our Common Love

Number two: our common love. Look again in this verse—he says, "If there be any encouragement from Christ, any comfort of love..." That is, if our love is real—and the word comfort means, "with strength"—then we're going to have this tender love one for another. We just had a wonderful deacons' meeting tonight. And, a great part of the deacons' meeting was where the deacons were telling one another how much they love one another, and it brought tears to my eyes. Because, the Bible says, "If God so loved us,

we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11). And, Jesus said, in John 15:12, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." So, why should we stay together as a church? Our common Lord—Jesus encourages us to do it. Our common love—we love one another, because Jesus first loved us.

C. Our Common Life

And then, here's a third reason: He mentions, in verse 1, "the fellowship of the Spirit." Now, that word fellowship is *koinonia*; it means that the Holy Spirit that's in me is the same Holy Spirit that's in you. And, the Holy Spirit that's in her is the same Holy Spirit that's in him. This is the fellowship of the Spirit—the *koinonia* of the Spirit. We have a common Lord, a common love, and a common life. The Holy Spirit of God that dwells in me dwells in you. The Holy Spirit of God keeps us from being just an organization and makes us an organism. He is the life of the church. He puts the life of Christ in us. And, the same Spirit that's in me is in you, because we're in the same Body and share one Spirit—the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if I hurt you, then I hurt me. If I encourage you, then I encourage me, for we are in this together.

Years and years ago, as a young preacher, I read a story about two ships that were in a naval battle, and they were shelling one another in the fog. And, when the fog lifted, they found out they were both on the same side. And, I think sometimes that happens in churches where people who share a common life turn on one another to feed and devour on one another.

D. Our Common Load

And then, here's the fourth reason that we need unity in the church: our common Lord. Our common love, our common life, and the common load that we're all carrying. Look, if you will, here, in verse 1: He speaks of "bowels and mercies." What does that mean? It literally means "tender mercies." Why does he say—why does the old King James say—the "bowels and mercies"? Have you ever hurt so bad that you just felt it in the pit of your stomach? That's what he's talking about. He's saying, "Oh, if you really love Jesus, then you're going to love down so deep that you're going to have this tender mercy for those who are hurting."

Now, every one of us is sitting on a row in this church. And, I can say this, and I believe I'm correct: On every row tonight there's a heartache—if you only knew it—on every row. Everybody is sitting near somebody, most likely, who has a heartache. And, folks, they're carrying a load, and they need your love, because they share your life, and they know your Lord. And, that's the motive for unity.

II. The Method of Unity

Now, let's talk a little bit about the method of unity. What is it? Look in Phil 2:2-4—we're in chapter 2. He says here:

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 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 2:2-4).

A. Harmony

So, first of all, he says we're to be likeminded; that means we're to be in harmony. Now, here, at Bellevue Baptist Church, we have people from all walks of life. We have young and old, educated and uneducated. We have people who are financially well off; we have people who are impoverished. We have people who are white, people who are black, and people who are Asian. We have people who are from the North and people from the South. We have people who have different ideas and who have different political persuasions. And yet, we are to be in harmony. We are to be, according to this verse, likeminded. Now, that doesn't mean that we all have to be carbon copies. That doesn't mean that we all have to think alike. It doesn't mean that we can't have various ideas about various subjects. But yet, there must be that harmony.

A well-known music teacher said—and I've used this illustration many times: "It's virtually impossible to tune one piano to another piano—virtually impossible. But, if you'll take one piano and tune it to a tuning fork, and take another piano and tune it to the same tuning fork, then rather than having cacophony, you can have harmony, because both pianos are tuned to the same tuning fork. As a matter of fact, you could take one of these pianos, and take it downtown, and tune it to the same tuning fork. It could be in a completely different place, and yet, it would be in harmony with the piano here." And, that's the way it is with us. When I'm in tune with Jesus, and you're in tune with Jesus, we may be different on some subjects, but folks, in our core—in our heart—we're going to be likeminded. We'll have as many different ideas as there are people here tonight—several thousand of us—but we're all going to be in agreement on this one: His name is Jesus. Amen? Jesus. We are likeminded about the Lord Jesus.

Now, you see, folks, we're talking, tonight, about unity. You know, there are three words that sound alike: one is unity; one is union; and one is uniformity. Now, it's unity that we're looking for, not union. Somebody has well said, "You can take two tomcats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline, and you have union, but you don't have unity." And, you can kind of conjure up that picture in your mind. We want more than union. We want to be more than wired together, or rusted together, or frozen together—that's union. And then, uniformity. What is uniformity? Uniformity comes from without—everybody saying the same thing, looking alike, and doing the same things.

That uniformity comes by pressure from without. Union comes from within, where we have the same Spirit and the same Lord. We're not brought together by rules. We're not brought together by threats. We are bound together by love of the Lord Jesus. And so, there's to be harmony.

B. Humility

And, right with that harmony there's to be humility. Look in verse 3: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3). Now, the word strife refers to a party spirit. You say, "Well, I'm a Democrat," or, "I'm a Republican," or, "I went to this high school," or, "I went to that high school," or, "I belong to this class," or, "I belong to that class." And, if you have a party spirit, then your group will come first, rather than the Church of the Lord Jesus.

And, sometimes, I see churches with a party spirit. And, sometimes, it keeps a church from growing. You see, for example, a growing church might need space. We might move you out of your Sunday School class to another Sunday School class. And, you say, "Now, wait a minute. You're not going to move us. This is our department. This is our Sunday School class." No, it's not! It belongs to Jesus. And, when we get that class spirit—when we get that party spirit—that's dangerous. Sometimes, people want to follow different pastors. The Apostle Paul had that problem with the Corinthian church. One said, "I am of Paul"; another: "I am of Apollos" (1 Corinthians 3:4). No, folks. We're of Jesus. We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, strife speaks of a party spirit.

Vainglory speaks of a proud spirit. And, pride is a hurtful thing in any church. And, the reason we don't have unity in churches is because of pride, because, the Bible says: "Only by pride cometh contention" (Proverbs 13:10). You see, the party spirit is putting someone else down; the prideful spirit is lifting yourself up. And, either one of these will hurt the fellowship of the church. And so, what do we need? What is the method of this unity? What is the method of this fellowship? It is humility. It is, my dear friend, harmony.

C. Helpfulness

Here's the third thing: It is helpfulness. Look, if you will, in verse 4: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4). William Booth founded the Salvation Army. They were having a great convention. They wanted the old general to come, and he was too sick and worn to come. They said, "Well, send us a letter. Send us a telegram. Send us something that we can read to the convention." He sent a one-word telegraph. You know what that one word was? "Others." Others—that's what keeps a church together—when we're thinking of other people. We sing a song:

Others, Lord, yes others,
Let this my motto be,
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee. (Charles D. Meigs)

III. The Model for Unity: The Mind of Christ - Phil 2:5-11

Now, here's the third and final thing before we have the Lord's Supper. I've talked to you about the motive for our unity. I've talked to you about the method for our unity, and what it is—this method that comes right out of the Word of God is harmony, humility, and helpfulness. Now, last of all, before we have the Lord's Supper, let me talk to you a little bit about the model for unity.

Now, Paul is asking for unity, but now, he's going to give an illustration of what he is talking about. Begin now, if you will, in verse 5—he says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"—now, that's the model—"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. 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 2:5-11).

Now, to have the kind of unity that I'm talking about, we must admit that we do not have what it takes, because our minds are carnal. So, what we need is the mind of Christ. And, we can have the mind of Christ, because the Apostle Paul says: "Let this mind be in you" (Philippians 2:5). And, if you're willing, then you can let the mind of the Lord Jesus be in you. That means that His mental and moral attitude will be ours, supernaturally. Now, we just allow the mind of the Lord Jesus to be in us.

A. The Mind of Voluntary Service

What is the mind of Jesus? Well, first of all, it is the mind of voluntary service. Look at it right here, if you will—verse 7: "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7)—voluntary service.

In our Love Offering this year, we're not asking you merely to give your money. We are asking you to give your voluntary service. Now, you may think you're too good, too big, or too important to serve in our children's department and our pre-school department. I'm glad the Lord Jesus, who was "in the form of God [and] thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Philippians 2:6), didn't think He was too good to leave Heaven to come to this Earth and to gird Himself with a towel and wash His disciples' feet. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). His service was voluntary service. And, this church ought to be crowded with volunteers who say, "Here I am. You don't have to beg me to serve Jesus by serving these little children." Now, service does not demean you—it exalts you. And, you didn't get saved and put in Bellevue Baptist Church to sit, soak, and to sour, but to serve.

B. The Mind of Vicarious Sacrifice

Now, here's the second thing; here's the second thing in this model: not only voluntary service, but also vicarious sacrifice—vicarious sacrifice. Look again, if you will, in verse 8 of this same chapter: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Jesus died upon that cross, in agony and blood, for the Church.

We're going to ask you in the Love Offering not only to serve, but to sacrifice. And, very frankly, most of us know very little about sacrifice. Very frankly, most of our giving does not change our lifestyle. We do the same things we would have done had we not given. We go to the same places, eat the same food, wear the same things, drive the same car, and live in the same house. It does not affect our lifestyle. But, Jesus did voluntary service. He did vicarious sacrifice; that is, He died for others. You might say, "Well, you know, I've done my time in the nursery. My children are up and grown. Why should I go in there and sacrifice my time and my effort for others?" I'll tell you why: because Jesus is your model. Jesus is your model.

C. The Mind of Victorious Significance

Now, here's the third thing before we have the Lord's Supper: Not only do we see Jesus as this model in voluntary service, and not only do we see Jesus as the model in vicarious sacrifice, but we also see Jesus as the model in victorious significance.

What was the significance of what Jesus did? Well, I want you to look at it here very carefully. And, the Bible says, in verse 9: "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"—now, here it is; here's the significance—"to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11)—to the glory of God the Father. When a church is filled with people who, in harmony and humility and helpfulness, love and serve one another—when we serve voluntarily and when we give sacrificially—here is the significance: God is glorified! He was glorified in the life of His Son, the Lord Jesus. And, I want Him to be glorified in my life, and I want Him to be glorified in your life. And, I want to say this: that unity in the church glorifies the Lord Jesus. Jesus prayed, in John 17, that we might be one that the world might believe (John 17:20-21).

Conclusion

C.S. Lewis was a brilliant and a gifted British writer. He wrote a book that is very interesting; it's called *The Screwtape Letters*. Screwtape was his name for the devil himself. And, in C.S. Lewis' mind, he imagines Screwtape speaking to his nephew. His nephew's name, this demon, is Wormwood. And, Wormwood was Screwtape's favorite recruiter on Earth. And, what Screwtape is trying to do is to get division in the Church. And, here's what he says to Wormwood: "The church is a fertile field. If you just keep them bickering over details, structure, organization, money, property, personal hurts, and misunderstandings. The one thing you must prevent: Don't ever let them look up and see the banners flying. For, if they ever see the banners flying, you have lost them forever. Just keep them on these details." He's saying, "Don't let them see the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel over their heads." That's the idea. And, friend, I want Bellevue Baptist Church always to see the banners flying. I want this to be a glorious church.

In 1917, the bishops of the Orthodox Church in Russia were holding a meeting, and they were having a heated debate—the bishops of the church. Just a few blocks down the street, the Bolsheviks, the young revolutionaries, were also having a meeting. They were going to put into implementation a plan that would overthrow the Czar of Russia, that would decimate the church, and that would put in its place godless atheism. Over here, the bishops were arguing; over here, the Communists were plotting. The year was 1917. And, by the way, would you like to know what the bishops were arguing about? Would you like to know what was causing such bitter division? They were arguing about whether they were going to use 18-inch or 22-inch candles in the church, when, right down the road, the Communists were at work, plotting to overthrow the government.

Now, folks, when we have the Lord's Supper—when we come together—do you know the significance of the Lord's Supper? Well, of course, it speaks of His body, and it speaks of His blood. Do you know what else it speaks of? It speaks of our unity. Paul, when he spoke of the Lord's Supper, said: "We are all to be together in one place," for, he said, "you are one loaf of bread baked together" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). That's what he's talking about.

Look up here, and let me ask you something: Will you pledge your heart to my heart, and let us, together, pledge our hearts to Heaven, that we will do all within our power, always, to preserve the unity of the Church? Will you? Just bow your heads and nod your heads "amen."

SERMON NOTES

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

TITLES:

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE (which we could subtitle...)

"How to Develop an Other's Orientation"

We need to learn instead of saying **Me-first,** to say, **"Me-third."**

Recall the **mnemonic** for "J.O.Y."...

Jesus - our Example,

Others - our goal to serve

Yourself - our experience of joy

Y is last. That's what Paul says in Php 2:4: "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." The Greek word for "**look**" is not just to see something but actually to fix one's attention on, with great interest in. **Here's the application** - Some of us (myself for sure) need to take our eyes off OURSELVES and literally lift them (our eyes) to LOOK WITH ATTENTION at others. This lines up with what our Lord taught in Mark 10:44: "Whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."

As an aside here is a great application of Php 2:3-4 - Fill in the blanks of this paraphrase with the names of two people you are struggling with right now:

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard _____ as more important than yourself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of _____."

How can we really do that from the heart?

That's what we will talk about today, for God has give us an example to follow and the power to enable us to follow!

ILLUSTRATION - Watchman Nee, the Chinese evangelist, tells of a Christian he once knew in China. He was a poor rice farmer, and his fields lay high on a mountain. Every day he pumped water into the paddies of new rice, and every morning he returned to find that a neighbor who lived down the hill had opened the dikes surrounding the Christian's field to let the water fill his own. For a while the Christian ignored the injustice, but at last he became desperate. He met and prayed with other Christians and came up with this solution. The next day the Christian farmer rose early in the morning and first filled his neighbor's fields; then he attended to his own. Watchman Nee tells how the neighbor subsequently became a Christian, his unbelief overcome by a genuine demonstration of a Christian's humility and Christlike character.

Constable - This paragraph is the most important one in the epistle and the most difficult to interpret. "By anyone's reckoning, Php 2:6-11 constitutes the single most significant block of material in Philippians."

THIS TEXT IS SUPERLATIVELY DOCTRINAL BUT IS NOT "DRY DOCTRINE" FOR IT TEACHES A BASIC PRINCIPLE WHICH IS SUPREMELY PRACTICAL - you can write this down - If you're experiencing friction in your relationships, whether at home or anywhere, chances are you need to grow in humility. C. S. Lewis saw this and wrote, "Pride has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began. Pride always means enmity--it is enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God." (Mere Christianity)

Calvin sums up the practical application of our text: "Since, then, the Son of God descended from so great a height, how unreasonable that we, who are nothing, should be lifted up with pride!" But, the fact is, we must fight pride all our lives. In 1985, a Spanish bullfighter made a tragic mistake. He thrust his sword a final time into the bull, which then collapsed. Thinking that the bull was dead, the bullfighter turned to the crowd to acknowledge the applause. But the bull was not dead. It rose and lunged at the back of the unsuspecting matador, piercing his heart with its horn.

Pride is like that. Just when we think we've conquered it and we turn to accept the congratulations of the crowd, pride stabs us in the back. It won't be dead before we are. In this section of Scripture Paul is going to teach us to fight pride by focusing on the example of what the Savior did for us by leaving the glory of heaven and coming to die for our sins. Have that same mind in you which was in Christ Jesus: "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (2:3, 4). That's the way toward harmony in our church and in our homes.

May God by His Spirit be pleased to drive these truths like stakes deeply into our minds so our hearts might be transformed and our lives, our families and our church might grow progressively more and more like Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

OUTLINES: these are just suggestions

THE MIND OF CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE 2:1-4

- Appeal for Unity (1-2)

- Appeal for Humility (3-4)

THE MIND OF CHRIST IN EXAMPLE 2:5-8

- Exhortation to Christians (5): *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*
- Example of Christ (6-8)

Christ stripped Himself of the robes of glory, and covered Himself with the rags of humanity. Why? So that He could redeem men from sin and bring them to God.

INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11:

It would **not** be an exaggeration to say that Philippians 2:5-11 is the greatest Christological passage in the Scriptures. This is an incredibly majestic text that has a "Take your shoes off" grandeur. It is so grand in fact, that it becomes very easy to lose sight of Paul's point in writing it. Like a deer spellbound by the headlights of an approaching car, it is possible get caught up in the brilliance of the passage and forget that Paul has written it to illustrate his point that we are not to be self-centered but united, serving one another in humility (Phil. 2:1-5). Have you ever said to someone "you have an attitude?"

In these few verses we see the great sweep of Christ's life from eternity past to eternity future, and we are admitted to the breathtaking purposes of God in human salvation.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT - In Lewis Carroll's famous book, *Through the Looking Glass*, Alice steps through the mirror in the living room to find a world on the opposite side where everything is backwards: Alice wants to go forward, but every time she moves, she ends up back where she started; she tries to go left and ends up right; up is down and fast is slow. Similarly, Christianity is a kind of looking glass world where everything works on principles opposite to those of the world around us. To be blessed, be a blessing to others. To receive love, give love. To be honored, first be humble. To truly live, die to yourself. To gain the unseen, let go of the seen. To receive, first give. To save your life, lose it. To lead, be a servant. To be first, be last.

In Philippians 2:5-11, Paul will explain that the way up is down. That's right: Down is up, up is down. The way to be great is to go lower. The way up is down. The logical flow of Philippians has been building up to this great truth. After addressing the church as a unified whole (Php 1:1-2), Paul offers a prayer for them to achieve this unity (Php 1:3-11). He then gives his own life as a model (Php 1:12-26) and urges the church to live lives of humility and unity without (Php 1:27-30) and within the church (Php 2:1-4). Finally, Paul arrives at a crescendo and turns his attention to the powerful example of Christ Himself in Php 2:5-11. This is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible. Many scholars believe that this is the best passage in the Bible to defend and explain that Jesus Christ is God. However, this sermon will not be a systematic theology lesson because it is found in a context that stresses the need for unity in the local church.

Dr. F. B. Meyer wrote of this section, "In the whole range of Scripture, this paragraph stands in almost unapproachable and unexampled majesty." Most scholars agree that these verses are a hymn or poem that Paul either wrote himself or included here as an appropriate illustration. It provides a powerful conclusion to his message on unity.

While the beauty of the Incarnation of our Savior is eloquently expressed in this paragraph, **we must remember that this was not given as a doctrinal treatise**. Rather, it is an illustration of the kind of humility and servanthood necessary to preserve unity in the body of Christ.

As one pastor put it "Today I will attempt to do an exposition of one of the most amazing and profound passages in all the Bible. My very best attempt at sound preaching will be but a puny effort, for there are no words to describe this sublime passage. Perhaps you would do better, after this sermon, to go home and, on your knees, pour over the sacred words yourself. I assure you, when you get off your knees, you will have a deeper adoration and appreciation for the Person and work of Christ."

Let me ask you a question - **Does anyone know what a parabola is or what it looks like?** Here's a picture of a **parabola** (the **blue** line) ...

Now this is a secular diagram from Wikipedia, but do you see anything that stands out in the picture? **The Cross!** Yes, you nailed it (pun intended)! In fact, today's message could be entitled "**The Great Parabola**." Why do I say that? Look at the diagram below which depicts what happened to Christ in Php 2:5-11...

How often have you heard “what goes up must come down,” but what we learn by the example of Christ is exactly the opposite. It is not what goes up that comes down, but rather what comes down is what goes up. This is a consistent teaching of Scripture: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up” (Jam. 4:10).

How significant is Php 2:5-11? As James Montgomery Boice said

“These verses bring us near to the bedrock of the early Christian faith and preaching. They contain most of the distinctive articles of the Christian creed. They teach the divinity of Christ, his preexistence, his equality with God the Father, his incarnation and true humanity, his voluntary death on the cross, the certainty of his ultimate triumph over evil, and the permanence of his reign.”

Here is one way we could outline this glorious section of Scripture:

CHRISTOLOGY IN PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11	
Christ's Example	Philippians 2:5
Christ's Preexistence	Philippians 2:6
Christ's Incarnation	Philippians 2:7-8
Christ's Exaltation	Philippians 2:9-11

We have been created to become like Christ. Listen to Romans 8:29 in the Living Bible: “For from the very beginning God decided that those who came to Him – and He knew who would – should become like His Son.” Let me be clear, He’s not saying we’re going to be a god, but He does desire for us to become godly as he develops His character in our lives. God wants to make us just like Jesus as we grow in grace and develop in discipleship. Ephesians 4:15 puts it this way: “We will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” One of the best ways to become like Jesus is to look at how He handled the temptations, trials, and trespasses of life. He is our model of Christian maturity and our goal should be to become like Him. Jesus put it this way in Matthew 10:25: “It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master.” This is a process that doesn’t happen overnight. It’s going to take the rest of our lives for God to build a Christlike character in us, but there are some tools we can use to help along the way.

Our future hope should motivate our present lifestyle - 1 Jn 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, **we will be like Him**, because we will see Him just as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Actions are always preceded by attitudes, which is why Php 2:5 is so important because Paul charges us to have a Christ-like attitude before we can carry out Christ-like actions. Obedience to the command and observance of the walk both necessitate our dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Given our natural bent to be self-centered, it has always been difficult to live out Christ’s directive—as Paul advises the Philippians in our present text, to “[do] nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Php 2:3, 4). Humility and others-directedness are hard for us. We find it difficult in our most important relationships both in the home and in the household of faith. I would say it is not just “difficult” but impossible to act like Christ depending on our natural strength! We might appear to have some success for a while, but natural strength cannot imitate Christ, Who relied on the strength of the Holy Spirit, leaving us an example to follow. The only way to successfully obey Php 2:3-5 is by rejecting our tendency to rely on our own strength and to learn to rely wholly on the enabling power of the the Holy Spirit! How are you doing? Are you learning to lean hard on the Spirit or are you still trying to live this Christ life in your “own” strength?

Review:

- Php 2:1 - The excellence of what we have (READ)
- Php 2:2-4 - The expectation of what we must do (READ)
- Php 2:5-8 - The example to follow (READ)
- Php 2:9-11 - The exaltation of our Lord

CONTEXT:

The church at Philippi, as good as it was, still had selfishness and division. Paul challenges the believers, in light of the example of

Christ, to “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Php 2:3-5).

How does this relate to the previous section on unity, Php 2:1-4? After exhorting the Philippian saints in Phil 2:2–4 to think the same thing, to have the same love, to be in heart agreement, and in lowliness of mind to consider one another as excelling themselves, Paul says, “**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus**” This exhortation reaches back to Phil 2:2–4 for its **definition** and ahead to Phil 2:6–8 for its **illustration**. This is a command to make this our lifestyle!

Php 2:5 **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,**

What is attitude? (ESV calls it mind) The English definition is a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, which is generally reflected in a person's behavior. And so our attitudes lead to actions. If our attitudes are selfish, most of us know the type of actions that result. If our attitudes are selfless, the actions are completely different. It is a basic principle that outlook determines outcome. If our outlook is selfish, the actions will be divisive and destructive, the exact opposite of the effect Paul desires for the church at Philippi and at Wayside.

What is fascinating in this section is that Paul FIRST gives us the charge to "Have this mind among yourselves" and then he gives us the truth of Christ's example which should serve to motivate our obedience. Stated another way Paul applies the lesson before he states it. In other words in Php 2:5 we have the **exhortation** (that flows naturally from Php 2:1-4) and in Php 2:6-11 we have the **example** of the "mind of Christ" which we as a church and individually are to practice as our lifestyle. We are called to imitate Christ's model of humility (2:5-8). **To summarize the application, the way that we can imitate Christ's example is by giving up our "rights."** Obviously, living up to this attitude of Christ is not easy. It's a pursuit that humbles every believer to dust and yet we are commanded to pursue this lofty goal. **How is your attitude today? Does it line up with Jesus Christ or with your natural tendencies and inclinations?**

Scientists have succeeded in causing chickens to sound like quail. Researchers took tissue from parts of the quail brain thought to control the bird's call and implanted it in the brains of five chicken embryos. The experiment worked! The hatched chicks sounded like quail rather than chickens. When you believed in Christ, God implanted His mind into yours (1 Cor 2:16) and you became a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). However, unlike the chickens who sound like quail forever, you will not sound and act like Christ for the rest of your life without continually putting on His mind. Though there are a variety of things you can do to renew your Christlike mind, the best way is to **be in the Word daily**. Paul is calling for the saints at Philippi and us to be daily transformed by the "renewing of our mind" (Ro 12:2) because he knows that only in this way can we carry out the command for Christ-like behavior. Just try to be selfless and humble like Christ in your own strength! Our flesh ever gravitates toward selfishness and pride! **But it is vital to remember that Christ has not left us alone to try to carry this out by ourselves.** And that's why this call to put on the mind of Christ is followed by Paul's call for us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Php 2:12). And then Paul explains **how it is possible to daily have a selfless, sacrificial, servant oriented mind of Christ** writing that "it is God (THE HOLY SPIRIT) Who is at work (continually "energizing") in you, both to **WILL** (the Spirit gives us the "want to", the desire have a Christ-like attitude) and to **work** (the Holy Spirit continually gives us the power pursue this Christ-like attitude or mindset) for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:13)" Ben will unpack that great passage next week, but just know now that in calling for us to have the MIND OF CHRIST, God has given us His Spirit to energize **the desire and the power** to have that selfless, sacrificial, servant oriented mind like Christ had as a Man.

Remember that the road to victory is paved with humble submission to God! Are you experiencing victory over sin in your life? If not you might examine your degree of humble submission to God. As Spurgeon once said "We must stoop to conquer. He who is willing to be nothing shall be possessor of all things."

As [Guzik](#) says "Paul will, in wonderful detail, describe for us the mind of Jesus in the following verses. But here, before he describes the mind of Jesus, he tells us what we must *do* with the information. It is all too easy for us to read the following description of Jesus and admire it from a distance. God wants us to be awed by it, but also to see it as something that we must enter into and imitate. Remember also that this mind is something granted to us by God. 1 Corinthians 2:16 says that *we have the mind of Christ* But let this mind shows us that it is also something we must *choose* to walk in. You have to let it be so.

Php 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

Our English word "FORM" can be misleading for it suggests shape or outward appearance. But as explained below the Greek word translated "form" (*morphe*) refers not so much to the outward appearance but to the essential nature of something or someone. And so "The form of God" speaks of Jesus' essence or nature as God, whereas "equality with God" speaks of the glories or prerogatives of God. Together the two expressions are some of the strongest expressions of Christ's deity in the entire Bible! What does it mean that Jesus EMPTIED HIMSELF? We can be sure of one thing: This phrase doesn't mean that Jesus emptied Himself of any of His divine attributes (emptying by subtraction). If Jesus did such a thing for even one moment, He would cease to be God.²⁸ Fortunately, the next clause in 2:7 explains the meaning of "emptied Himself"—"taking the form of a bond-servant being made in the likeness of men." Jesus' act of "emptying" Himself was in His act of "taking" on a human nature. It was emptying by addition. In other words, Jesus, being God, "emptied Himself" by adding humanity. Stated another way - This verse is not talking about what Jesus emptied Himself OF, but what He emptied Himself INTO. It's like pouring something from one pitcher into another. Jesus took all of His deity and poured it into another vessel, the "form of a bond-servant." He who is very God of very God became "very slave of very slave." He didn't stop being who He is, but He changed the form of who He is. Paul's point is that Jesus Christ practiced self-denial and self-sacrifice for our sake and became "God con carne" and Latin for flesh is "carnis" so Jesus became "God with flesh!" What an astounding, unfathomable thought. Jesus left the glory and splendor of heaven and came to dwell on earth to serve others. He understood the way up is down. "Taking the form of a bond-servant." In other words, Jesus became a particular kind of man, a slave, the lowest position a person could become in the Roman world. The King of the Universe, the Lord of glory, voluntarily became a pauper for our sake. He had to borrow a place to be born, a boat to preach from, a place to sleep, a donkey to ride upon, an upper room to use for the last supper, and a tomb in which to be buried. He created the world but the world did not know Him. He was insulted, humiliated, and rejected by the people He made. The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the Incarnation. Jesus went as low as He could possibly go. Jesus came as a lowly servant, which is good news for us because that means there is no one with whom Jesus cannot identify. This means no matter what you go through, no matter how low you may get, you can never sink so far that Jesus cannot get under you and lift you up. He can identify with you in any situation, no matter how hard: poverty, loneliness, homelessness, rejection, you name it. As a man He was tempted and "since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." (Heb 2:18) "Come to the aid" is one word in Greek which mean to run to the aid someone upon hearing their cry. The next time you are being strongly tempted CRY OUT to Jesus!

Observations:

- His timeless existence - He has always been God. Our mind cannot grasp the concept of before the foundation of the world, but Paul says "He existed in the form of God."
- The form of God - He was in his very essence God. **Form** is *morphe* which speaks of the unchanging essence of His nature. Stated simply - **Jesus Christ possesses all of God's attributes.** Paul is saying Jesus is fully God! This phrase is not a reference to the outer appearance of Christ but indicates a profound and genuine inner identity. Jesus Christ was not simply like God; He was the very nature and substance of God. All that God is, Jesus Christ was and is and ever will be. To say that Jesus was in the form of God is the same as saying that Jesus was God.
- In Paul's day, the word *morphe* was used of a Roman stamp. Official government documents were sealed with wax. While the wax was still hot, they would press a ring or stamp into it bearing the emperor's insignia. The impression made in the wax was an exact representation of the insignia on the ring. That's the relationship Jesus Christ bears to God the Father. Jesus is the exact representation of who and what God is..
- The phrase "**being in the form of God**" is nothing less than a direct assertion of Deity. In Greek philosophy the word translated "form" means "the real essence of a thing." In this context it means that Jesus possessed "the specific character of God." Whatever it is that makes God God, Jesus possessed that same essence. Whatever you can say about God, you can also say about Jesus. He was all that God is and possessed all that God had. He was 100% God and nothing less. God's omnipotence was his, God's sovereignty was his, God's holiness was his, God's eternity was his, God's wisdom was his, and God's justice was his. (Pritchard)
- When we are told that Jesus took the **form** of a bondservant, the same word is employed that describes Jesus as being in the form of God. Jesus was in the form of God and He took upon Himself the form of a bondservant. His servanthood was authentic in substance and reality.
- His choice - to not regard equality with God something to be exploited to His own advantage. **APPLICATION** - If the only person in the world who ever had the right to assert His rights waived them, then you and I can do the same!

Here is a simple distinction between two important terms Paul uses in Php 2:6-8 - **Morphe**, "**form**", in Php 2:6,7 denotes a permanent expression of essential attributes, while **schema**, "**appearance**" (Php 2:8), refers to outward appearance that is subject to change. This describes Jesus' pre-incarnate existence. We must remind ourselves that Jesus did not begin His existence in the manger at Bethlehem, but is eternal God.

Phillips paraphrase: "For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his prerogatives as God's equal."

Wiersbe - A reporter was interviewing a successful job counselor who had placed hundreds of workers in their vocations quite happily. When asked the secret of his success, the man replied: "If you want to find out what a worker is really like, don't give him responsibilities—give him privileges. Most people can handle responsibilities if you pay them enough, but it takes a real leader to handle privileges. A leader will use his privileges to help others and build the organization; a lesser man will use privileges to promote himself." Jesus used His heavenly privileges for the sake of others—for our sake.

Wiersbe - We expect unsaved people to be selfish and grasping, but we do not expect this of Christians, who have experienced the love of Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit (Phil. 2:1–2). More than twenty times in the New Testament, God instructs us how to live with "one another." We are to prefer one another (Rom. 12:10), edify one another (1 Thes. 5:11), and bear each other's burdens (Gal. 6:2). We should not judge one another (Rom. 14:13) but rather admonish one another (Rom. 15:14). **Others** is the key word in the vocabulary of the Christian who exercises the submissive mind.

Php 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

- **Emptied Himself** - "Kenosis" - Profound! Mysterious! Of what? Not His divine nature = impossible! He continued to be the Son of God. There is controversy re the "kenosis", some liberals suggesting He became human in the sense that He was fallible, possibly even sinful. Conservative interpretation is that He took on the limitations of humanity.
- The best and most accurate way to define the **self-emptying of Jesus** is that, in His incarnation, Christ voluntarily surrendered the independent exercise of His divine attributes. He never ceased to possess them all, but He voluntarily put Himself under the authority of God the Father and under the control of the Holy Spirit in their exercise. There is no record of Jesus having used these divine attributes in His first thirty years of human existence, but when the Spirit came upon Him at His baptism, He began to demonstrate these powers.
- The word **likeness** suggests similarity but difference. Though His humanity was genuine, He was different from all other humans in that He was sinless.

Calvin sums up the practical application of our text: "Since, then, the Son of God descended from so great a height, how unreasonable that we, who are nothing, should be lifted up with pride!"

Emptied Himself - here are 5 things to help you grasp this profound truth. Remember He never ceased being fully God when He became fully Man. (The list under "Jesus Incarnation" below is easier to understand and apply).

(1) His heavenly glory -veiling of His preincarnate glory (Jn 17:5)

(2) His independent authority (Jn 5:19, 5:30, 8:28,)

(3) the voluntary nonuse of some of His divine prerogatives (His divine attributes) during the time He was on earth (Mt 24:36).

(4) eternal riches for while on earth Christ was poor and owned very little (cf. 2 Co 8:9);

(5) a favorable relationship with God - He felt the Father's wrath for human sin while on the cross (cf. Mt 27:46 MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?)

Jesus Incarnation - How could we describe Jesus emptying Himself and what did it accomplish for us?

1. He descended that we might ascend (John 14:3)
2. He was born that we might be born again (John 3:3)
3. He became a servant that we might become sons (Galatians 4:6-7)
4. He was forsaken that we might not be forsaken (Matthew 28:20)
5. He died that we might live (John 5:24)
6. He came down that we might be caught up (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

- **Form of bond-servant** - The essence of His nature - As He Himself testified - Mk 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Php 2:8 - Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death

- Remember that Paul is telling the Philippians that if they think they cannot humble themselves to the will of one another, they need to ponder the obedience of the Lord of glory who was willing to give up His rights as their example of **perfect selflessness**. This is the attitude the saints at Philippi were to manifest. It is the attitude every believer is to manifest to assure unity in the body of Christ.
- Being found in appearance as a man - **THE CRADLE** - Simply stated He was born of the virgin Mary as a human baby. He was fully Man. **ILLUSTRATION** - During some unsettled days in ancient Rome, a slave heard that his master's name was on the liquidation list. He quickly put on his master's cloak and quietly awaited the arrival of the political butchers. When they found the slave dressed in his master's clothing, they killed him, supposing him to be the master. Likewise, the Master of the universe, Jesus Christ, took on Himself the cloak of our humanity. The death He endured is the death we deserved. Through His death, we have been spared.
- He humbled Himself - **THE CROSS** - His choice. Because of His great love for us. He willingly became the sacrificial Lamb
- **APPLICATION - WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED** - Look at the phrase **Being found in appearance as a man** - What is Paul saying? Paul uses the word **schema** which says that Christ was **MAN** in the sense that he endured all that we must endure in this world. The practical application is that there is **NOTHING** that happens in your life that Jesus' cannot understand. Hebrews 2:18 says "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are (continually being) tempted." "**Come to the aid**" is one word in Greek which means to run to one's aid upon hearing them cry out! The next time you are tempted, cry out to the One Who was "found in appearance as a man," because He understands what you are experiencing and will come to your aid.
- **APPLICATION - WHEN WE ARE SUFFERING** - As a Man Jesus experienced suffering. Peter used this truth to encourage Christians who were suffering - 1 Pe 2:21, 23 "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, **leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps...**(23) and while being reviled, **He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats**, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously." So when we are reviled, filled with the Spirit, we are enabled like Jesus not to revile in return (which is what our flesh wants to do). We don't threaten, but we rest in the truth that God is a perfect Judge and will judge evil that has been committed against us.
- A Christmas card captures the essence of Php 2:8 - A baby's footprint appears on the cover with the words, "Unto you is born this day a Savior." When you open the card, the phrase, "Which is Christ the Lord" is superimposed over a grown man's handprint, complete with a bloody hole in the palm.
- Death on a cross was brutal and barbaric and was not even talked about in polite Roman society circles. Ancient writers used to say that to die on a cross was to die a thousand times before you take your last breath. May I suggest that this was not the worst of it for Jesus? The most painful element of his death is that when He died, all the smelly sins and terrible transgressions of the entire world were placed on His shoulders. And when He hung on the cross as our sin substitute, God the Father had to look away, causing the Son to cry out in agony, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).
- Because JESUS was FULLY MAN He could take our punishment upon Himself and because He is FULLY GOD the shedding of His blood satisfied divine justice. Jesus is both just and the justifier.
- **Max Lucado** - "Jesus humbled Himself. He went from commanding angels to sleeping in the straw. From holding stars to clutching Mary's finger. The palm that held the universe took the nail of a soldier. Why? Because that's what love does."
- **Augustine** said it this way (Listen closely) - "Jesus took to Himself what He was not, while remaining what He was...He continued to be what He is, while appearing to us as what we are."
- Dr. J.H. Jowett has said, "Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing." If there is to be any blessing, there must be some "bleeding." At a religious festival in Brazil, a missionary was going from booth to booth, examining the wares. He saw a sign above one booth: "Cheap Crosses." He thought to himself, "That's what many Christians are looking for these days—cheap crosses. My Lord's cross was not cheap. Why should mine be?" The person with the submissive mind does not avoid sacrifice. He lives for the glory of God and the good of others; and if paying a price will honor Christ and help others, he is willing to do it.
- The test of the submissive mind is not just how much we are willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much we are willing to give in terms of sacrifice. One pastor complained that his men were changing the words of the hymn from "Take my life and let it be" to "Take my wife and let me be!" They were willing for others to make the sacrifices, but they were unwilling to sacrifice for others. It is one of the paradoxes of the Christian life that the more we give, the more we receive; the more we sacrifice, the more God blesses. This is why the submissive mind leads to joy; it makes us more like Christ. This means sharing His joy as we also share in His sufferings. Of course, when love is the motive (Phil. 2:1), sacrifice is never measured or mentioned. The person who constantly talks about his sacrifices does not have the submissive mind. Is it costing you anything

to be a Christian? (Wiersbe)

- **Spurgeon** - "The lower he stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be his name, he stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and, when he reaches our level, and becomes man, he still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet."
- **Ray Pritchard** - Why did Jesus shed His blood on the cross? In three days we leave for our trip to Nigeria. As part of our preparation we had to take yellow fever shots. I am told that at the border, the Nigerian immigration officials will check to make sure we've been inoculated against yellow fever because people still die of that terrible disease. This week I learned where the vaccine comes from. In 1927 a man named Asibi, a West African native, came down with yellow fever. Unlike so many others, he did not die. Because his system had conquered the disease, Asibi's blood contained the antibodies which the doctors used to develop a successful vaccine. That vaccine has saved the lives of untold numbers of people around the world. Each dose of vaccine can be traced back to Asibi's original blood sample. One man's blood has saved the lives of millions of people. In a mysterious way we cannot understand, that is exactly what the blood of Jesus Christ did for us. His blood saves the lives of untold millions of people. His blood is the perfect "vaccine" against the disease called sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7, KJV).
- **ILLUSTRATION** - The home of an English family was discovered on fire. They thought everybody was out but the baby. The mother saved her. For years as the child grew up the mother went about the house with her hands covered. The eldest of the servants had never seen her hands uncovered. But the daughter came into her room one day unexpectedly, and the mother sat there with her hands uncovered. They were torn and scarred and disfigured. Instantly the mother tried to cover them as the girl came forward, but she said, "I had better tell you about it. It was when the fire was in the house and you were in your cradle. I fought my way through the flames to get you. I wrapped you in a blanket and dropped you through the window, and somebody caught you. I could not go down the stairway, so I climbed out of the window. My hands were burnt, and I slipped and caught on the trellis work. When I fell, my hands were torn. The doctor did his best, but, my dear, these hands were torn for you." And the girl, who had grown to womanhood, sprang toward her mother, took one hand and then the other, and buried her face in those hands, as she kept saying, "They are beautiful hands, beautiful hands." —J. Wilbur Chapman

Php 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

- **WHO HAS GOD HIGHLY EXALTED? YOU MAY BE SURPRISED AT THE ANSWER!** Highly exalted could be accurately paraphrased "**super exalted**" - God exalted Jesus to the highest possible degree to the point that it is difficult to describe with words. And note that it is the **MAN** Christ Jesus Whom the Father exalted. Contrast this with His humiliation - **God (Jesus) humbled Himself**. On the other hand **in the exaltation it is God Who exalted the MAN Christ Jesus** to sit at the right hand of glory! A truth we often forget is that at the right hand of the Father is the **GOD-MAN Christ Jesus**. In His exaltation He did not cease to be God, and throughout eternity will remain Jesus Christ, fully God and fully Man. And forever **we will see His scars as proof of His humanity** and as **assurance that His covenant with us is eternal. IF YOU NEED ASSURANCE OF YOUR SALVATION, REMEMBER HIS ETERNAL SCARS THAT PROCURED YOUR SALVATION!** John assures us of Jesus' everlasting Humanity writing "And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders **a Lamb standing, AS IS SLAIN** (perfect tense - forever appearing slain which speaks of His scars)....." (Rev 5:9) In short Jesus Christ is the perfect MEDIATOR, God and Man united forever. Spurgeon (attributed to John Boys) - The best way to reconcile two disagreeing families is to make some marriage between them; even so, the word became flesh, and dwelt among us in the world that he might thereby make our peace, reconciling God to man and man to God. **By this happy match the Son of God has become the Son of Man and the sons of man have become the sons of God.**" This is your King Christ Jesus. He should never be reduced in our thinking to an abstract concept, for JESUS is not simply the means by which God accomplished salvation. **He Himself is our salvation as God revealed in Humanity!**
- **WHAT ABOUT THE NAME HE IS LORD?** It was Juliet who asked, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would still be as sweet." That makes great poetry, but the fact of the matter is that we put a lot of stock in names. People do not generally ask for acetaminophen when they have a headache. They are usually looking for Tylenol. Names mean things for us. They represent quality. Advertising only goes so far; in the end there has to be some substance behind the claim. If there is, then you have a name that can rise above all other competitors. Jesus far outstrips all pretended competition, and the name given to him by the Father conveys supreme quality. It is a name that describes his very nature, a name that every tongue must confess and every knee bow to: "**LORD.**" Kurios, Master, Owner, His eternal title which signifies Sovereign power and total authority. Sadly, the word "**LORD**" does not seem to carry much weight today. This was not so in Paul's day. This was the imperial title that all of Rome would acknowledge as belonging to Caesar alone. But it only belonged to him after

a religious ceremony in which he was deified. Once he was "deified", the loyalty of people everywhere was determined by their willingness to declare that "Caesar is Lord."

- There were Christians at these times who were actually persecuted as atheists because they placed their loyalties above those that were considered owed to the state and the deified Caesar. The cry of the heathen populace in the Roman Empire against the Christians was "Away with the atheists! To the lions with the Christians!" Why? Because they would acknowledge no other Lord but Jesus.

EXAMPLE OF POLYCARP Bishop of Smyrna in the second century:

Now, as Polycarp was entering into the stadium, there came to him a voice from heaven, saying, "Be strong, and show thyself a man, O Polycarp!" No one saw who it was that spoke to him; but those of our brethren who were present heard the voice. And as he was brought forward, the tumult became great when they heard that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On his confessing that he was, [the proconsul] sought to persuade him to deny [Christ], saying, "Have respect to thy old age," and other similar things, according to their custom, [such as], "Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists." But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, "Away with the Atheists." Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, "**Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ; Polycarp declared, 'Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?'**"...The proconsul then said to him, "I have wild beasts at hand ; to these will I cast thee, except thou repent." But he answered, "Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous." But again the proconsul said to him, "I will cause thee to be consumed by fire, seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, if thou wilt not repent." But Polycarp said, "**Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt.**"

- **The "Apogee" of Christ** - Apogee is a term in astronomy and which is used figuratively to describe the highest point in the development of something; the climax or culmination. Christ's exaltation is the "Apogee" of all human history, the high point, the climax, the culmination.
- **For this reason also** - When you see a statement like this always pause to ponder and ask "For what reason?" This will slow you down, allow you to meditate on the Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to teach you. So the question is "for what reason?" Remember context is king in interpretation, so we need to examine the preceding passages. Sometimes the answer is easy as in this case -- the reason for His exaltation is His voluntary humiliation and complete obedience to the point of willingly dying on the Cross.
- God highly exalted Him - the Cross was the lowpoint, but not the endpoint, for His Father "highly exalted Him"
- **APPLICATION:** Four times in His ministry Jesus spoke on the text: "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Mt. 18:4; 23:12; Lk 14:11; 18:14). He lived the text. His own life is the greatest example of this principle.

Is this practical? Of course it is - For example James 4:6 says that " **GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**" Do you want to experience His amazing grace daily? Then walk the way Jesus walked, in humility, and you will be strengthened in your inner being by His grace. You will be fortified to fight the good fight of faith, regardless of what comes at you in your day. Are you experiencing spiritual attack? James goes on to say "Submit therefore to God (**THAT'S A WILLINGNESS TO BE HUMBLE**). Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves (**ENABLED BY THE SPIRIT YOU HAVE TO MAKE THE PERSONAL CHOICE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**) in the presence of the Lord, and **He will exalt you.**" Humble service may go unnoticed now, but it will be rewarded by the King Himself. Never trade temporal recognition for eternal reward!

Joseph suffered and served for thirteen years; but then God exalted him and made him the second ruler of Egypt. David was anointed king when he was but a youth. He experienced years of hardship and suffering, but at the right time, God exalted him as king of Israel.

Here's an example of humbling yourself-- Do you always need to be right? It takes a good dose of humility

to let go of the need to always be “right” and not do it with a condescending look. But every time you do, you’re actually emulating Christ rather than clinging to the advantage of your rightness.

HERE'S AN ILLUSTRATION - A famous Christian businessman was visiting a church and was asked to give a word of greeting. He got carried away telling all that God had done for him. “I have a successful business, a large house, a lovely family, a famous name, enough money to do the things I want to do and be able to give to Christian works. I have health and opportunities unnumbered. There are many people who would gladly exchange places with me. What more could God give me?” From the back of the auditorium a voice called, “**A good dose of humility!**”

So when you sense an attack of pride, surrender immediately to the Holy Spirit and let Him work in you (Php 2:13) to produce humility and submission before God. Remember: in the battle against pride, the only way to conquer is to surrender—surrender to the Spirit.

There have been some great names throughout history, but none greater than the Name above every name... And here are some of His great names:

He is the Alpha & Omega; the Beginning and the End; He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He is the Door; He is the Good Shepherd; He is the Vine; He is the Bread of Heaven; He is the Living Water; and He is the Light of the world. He is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace. He is the Lamb of God; the Lilly of the valley; the Rose of Sharon, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is the Messiah, He is Immanuel, He is Son of God and Son of man; He is our Kinsman-Redeemer. He is our Bridegroom. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is Lord, Savior, and Redeemer, the Rock of our salvation. He is the King of glory and the great I Am. He is Master, Ruler, and the Hope of our salvation. HE IS!

Php 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

THE LAST WORD!

ILLUSTRATION - GOD has a way of turning the tables on evil. The French philosopher Voltaire predicted that Christianity would be swept from existence within one hundred years. Yet just fifty years after he died in 1779, the German Bible Society had occupied Voltaire's house and was using his printing press to produce stacks of Bibles. During World War II, Adolf Hitler erected a massive stone structure in Monte Carlo. It was to be a radio station from which to broadcast Nazi propaganda into North Africa. Today, from that very building, **Trans World Radio** beams the Gospel of Christ's redeeming love all across Europe and into Russia and Africa. Could these ironies of history be just a hint of the last word Christ will have at the end of this age?

The combination of tongues confessing and knees bowing gives evidence that the idea is a complete submission to Jesus, both in word and in action, and one that is required of all.

As **Calvin** rightly points out, the submission of the devils and of unsaved men will not be voluntary. But all *will* acknowledge the Lord's supremacy whether they like it or not.

When we sing “**All hail the power of Jesus name!**” we actually mean it. Everybody is to bow before Him, for He is the Lord!

All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall.

Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all.

Bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him Lord of all!

O seed of Israel's chosen race
now ransomed from the fall,

hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all.

Hail him who saves you by his grace,
and crown him Lord of all!

3 Let every tongue and every tribe

responsive to his call,
to him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all.
To him all majesty ascribe,
and crown him Lord of all!

4 Oh, that with all the sacred throng
we at his feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all.
We'll join the everlasting song
and crown him Lord of all.

- **EVERY KNEE WILL BOW** - This is not a figure of speech but literal truth. And it is sobering truth -**every** knee **every** place! You mean even the demons? Yes, even Satan himself! You mean even those who scoffed at Him when He was alive on earth? Yes. You mean even those who today use His exalted Name as a curse word? Absolutely yes! **APPLICATION QUESTION** - What do you do when you are watching a show and they curse the Name of Jesus? Do you keep watching? Do you pay to watch a show like this? I realize this is a difficult question for you? It is super difficult for me! It is difficult to find a show or series that does not use Jesus' great Name in vain. But one day we and those who use that Name will bow before Him.
- At the mere mention of His name, everyone above the earth will bow, including all the good angels and all the redeemed who have died before Christ returns. Everyone on the earth will bow, including all human beings. Everyone under the earth will bow, including all the inhabitants of hell and all the evil angels. And in that moment, the cycle will have been completed. The One who was humiliated will be exalted. The One who was brought low will be raised up high.
- To bow before Him now means salvation; to bow before Him at the judgment means condemnation.

THE NAME - Jesus! No other name draws people together so closely, while at the same time evoking hatred in others.

In 1999, a political candidate answered a question about who had the greatest effect on his life by saying, "Jesus Christ. He changed my heart." This person's honest answer was met with disdain from people who detest the name of Jesus. On the other hand, people all over the world who love Christ meet every week to honor and praise Jesus' name. To them, His name means love, joy, peace, hope, and forgiveness. What is it about this name that divides people so clearly? Why do some treat the name of Jesus with contempt while others hold it in highest esteem? I think the reason some people can't stand Jesus' name is that they don't want to be reminded of their sins. Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), the One who saves us from our sins (Matthew 1:21). People who refuse to ask for forgiveness from sin cannot love the name of Jesus. Yet His name "is above every name," and one day "every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:9,11).

Jesus! Do you love that name? Praise God for that holy name—and tell others what Jesus has done for you. — Dave Branon

Jesus—O how sweet the name,
Jesus—every day the same;
Jesus—let all saints proclaim
Its worthy praise forever.
—Martin

Php 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When we understand the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, only one response makes sense—to fall on our knees and confess Him as Savior and Lord. There are two ways we can do this. We can either bow in humble submission today, confessing Jesus and receiving Him as our Savior, or we will be forced to bow to Him at the judgment. But every creature in heaven, on earth, and in hell is going to bow to Jesus Christ. When you bow to Jesus in repentance and submission, He becomes Lord of your life. And when He becomes Lord of your life, He takes over. That means He deserves all of your respect, honor, and obedience because of who He is and what He has done for you.

Now I want you to use your imagination as you listen to the somber words one more time (READ ABOVE) - Now imagine that this is the last act of a great play. This is the grand day when all creation confesses **Jesus Christ is Lord**. Those who do not confess Christ before they die, will be forced to confess Him with shame and terror. For those of us who have confessed Him during our life,

one glorious day we will gladly and with delight and humble adoration own Him as Lord of all creation. **Have you confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord of Creation?**

Although the entire creation will one day confess Jesus as "Lord", only those who do so during their life will be saved by that confession, Paul writing that "that if you **confess** with your mouth Jesus as **Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

Robert Morgan - Last Sunday morning I ended my message by telling of a young man who waited too long to make his decision for Christ. Evangelist Peter Cartwright pleaded with him, and the young man kept putting off the decision. He suddenly fell ill, and on his deathbed, the young man screamed, "It's too late. I'm lost! I must make my bed in hell! Lost! Forever lost!" I then closed with the verse that says, "Seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near." At the close of the second service, as I gave the invitation, a woman came forward, knelt with me here at the altar, and gave her heart to the Lord Jesus. Two days later, she was shot dead, killed by an ex-boyfriend who pumped her full of bullets as she got out of her car. I prayed with her at the altar Sunday, and yesterday I preached her funeral. I'm so glad she listened to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and made that decision, for it truly was her last opportunity. You and I don't know if we'll ever have another opportunity like this, to confess with our mouths Jesus as Lord and to believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead.

As Spurgeon rightly observed "'**NOW**' is the watchword of the wise." **LATER may be too late!** Right NOW counts for ever. How goes your preparation for the future dear saint? It's now or never. "Time is the seed of eternity." To make our life count for eternity, we must be wise in how we spend our time today. What will your eternal harvest be?

ILLUSTRATION - TOO LATE - An Englishman by the name of Ebenezer Wooten had just concluded a preaching service in the village square. The crowd had dispersed, and he was busily engaged in loading the equipment. A young man approached him and asked, "Mr. Wooten, what must I do to be saved?" Sensing that the fellow was trusting his own righteousness, Wooten answered in a rather unconcerned way, "It's too late!" The inquirer was startled. "Oh don't say that, sir!" But the evangelist insisted, "It's too late!" Then, looking the young man in the eye, he continued, "You want to know what you must do to be saved. I tell you it's too late now or any other time. The work of salvation is done, completed, finished! It was finished on the cross." Then he explained that our part is simply to acknowledge our sin and receive by faith the gift of forgiveness.

JESUS IS GOD - OKAY! JESUS IS LORD - NOT! - Chuck Colson notes that in the first century, if you stood in a public gathering and cried out, "Jesus is God!" no one would be upset. But if you shouted, "Jesus is Lord!" you would start a riot. Let us be crystal-clear about this. Rome did not persecute Christians because they believed in the deity of Christ, or that Jesus was the promised Messiah, or that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. Rome did not kill Christians because they said Jesus is the only way of salvation. Those were "religious beliefs" that did not threaten the state. But when Christians declared, "Jesus Christ is our Lord, and there is no other!" that was a direct attack on Caesar-worship, and thus punishable by death.

- The word "confess" means to say the same thing as and so to agree. Every created being that can vocalize will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, that He is Master and Sovereign Ruler over us and over everything.
- And what will be the grand result of all creation bowing and confessing Christ as Lord? God the Father will be glorified.
- **APPLICATION:** Of course we can never glorify God in the same way Jesus did, but to glorify God is our purpose. The Westminster Catechism asks "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." In Mt 5:16 Jesus tells us how to glorify God exhorting us - "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Here we see that "good works" bring glory to God. They are works that are initiated and empowered by the Spirit. So if we begin our day in the Word, surrendered to and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are much more likely to do good works that glorify our Father in heaven. Others see us not repaying evil for evil, forgiving when others have hurt us, etc. These are not natural responses and in them the world gets a proper picture of the invisible God.
- We honor God's name when we call Him our Father and live like His Son.
- What about ourselves? How easily to answer the first catechism question: My chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever! Can you see here how that is not just some teaching mechanism, but an astounding statement of what it is to have the very MIND OF CHRIST Himself? HERE IS THE QUESTION FOR ALL OF US -- Does this statement govern my talents, my fortunes, my gifts and prospects in life? In all these things, am I upheld by the kind of motivation that sustained Christ? Can I really give all that I am to Christ and to my fellow man and be satisfied that He receives the glory?
- Are you to be found In Him? May we have this mind in ourselves that was also in Christ Jesus. And as a result, may our humility be furthered by a consideration of the person, position and purpose of our Great God and Savior, Christ the Lord.

Benjamin Warfield said "*Only, when we humbly walk this path, seeking truly in it not our own things but those of others, we*

shall find the promise true, that he who loses his life shall find it. Only, when, like Christ, and in loving obedience to His call and example, we take no account of ourselves but freely give ourselves to others, we shall find, each in his measure, the saying true of himself also: "Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him." The path of self-sacrifice is the path to glory."

To summarize the application of this passage - "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" by the power of His Spirit we should daily seek to have

- **The Selfless "mind"** - which thinks nothing of itself, but only of others.
- **The Sacrificial "mind"** which is prepared to go to utmost lengths for those others' welfare.
- **The Serving "mind"** - which is happily content to render any service that will help.

This is the quintessential confession of Christianity. To know Christ as Savior is to confess Him as Lord.

C. S. Lewis explained our options regarding Jesus this way

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him or kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

ILLUSTRATIONS:

ILLUSTRATION: A former missionary told the story of two rugged, powerful mountain goats who met on a narrow pathway joining two mountain ridges. On one side was a chasm 1,000 feet deep; on the other, a steep cliff rising straight up. So narrow was the trail that there was no room to turn around, and the goats could not back up without falling. What would they do? Finally, instead of fighting for the right to pass, one of the goats knelt down and made himself as flat as possible. The other goat then walked over him, and they both proceeded safely. In a sense, this is what Jesus Christ did for us when He left heaven's glory and came to this earth to die for our sins. He saw us trapped between our sin and God's righteousness with no way to help ourselves. He humbled Himself by giving up His right to use His divine power. He came in the likeness of men and took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:5-8). Then, by dying for sinful mankind, He let us "walk over Him" so that we could experience forgiveness and receive eternal life.

ILLUSTRATION: President Nixon once declared in a speech that the greatest moment in human history was when man walked on the moon. Shortly afterwards, Billy Graham corrected him and said, "No, the greatest moment in history was not when man walked on the moon but when God walked on the earth."

GOD STOOPED DOWN - Dr. Richard Seltzer tells of a moment when he caught a transforming glimpse of what happened at Bethlehem. It reoriented this surgeon's life in an important way. He explains what happened in his book called, "Mortal Lessons."

I stand by the bed where a young woman lies, her face postoperative, her mouth twisted in palsy. A tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth, has been severed, and she will be thus from now on. Oh, the surgeon had followed with religious fervor the curve of her flesh. I promise you that. Nevertheless, to remove the tumor from her cheek, he had to cut that little nerve.

"Will my mouth always be like this?" the woman asks. "Yes, it always will be so. The nerve has been cut." She nods and is silent. Her young husband is in the room and he smiles and looks at his wife with a love so absolutely generous that it stuns the surgeon to silence. All at once I know who he is, and I understand and instinctively lower my gaze... The bridegroom bends down to kiss her mouth. And I am so close that I can see how he twists his lips to accommodate hers.

In commenting on this story, Pastor Dan Meyer writes, "Once upon a time, the God who bent down and took hold of a handful of dust and shaped humanity and breathed life into it stooped down again, and this time it was himself that he reshaped in order to kiss a disfigured earth with his grace and to breathe new life into the beloved. He showed us in that moment that it is not just the staggering height of God that displays His

grandeur, it is how far He is willing to bend down that fully displays His glory”(

ILLUSTRATION - After being married for over 50 years, a man revealed the secret to his successful marriage. He said, “Well, the wife and I had this agreement when we first got married. When she was bothered about something, she jus’ tell me and git it off her chest. And if I was mad about somethin’, I was to take a long walk. I ‘s’ppose you could attribute our successful marriage to the fact that I have mostly led an outdoor life.” This man was committed to unity!

Christ’s sacrifice of Himself motivates us to sacrifice ourselves for others.

HUMBLING HIMSELF - Bill Hybels has said: “The sights and sounds and smells and splendors of heaven are all Jesus knew from eternity past. When he wakes up as a baby, the first thing he sees on planet earth is that he’s in a barn. The first thing he smells is urine and manure. And the first sounds he hears are of animals. In heaven...Jesus had known legions of angels hovering around the throne, tens of thousands of them assigned to the full-time job of singing, ‘Worthy is the Lamb. Holy, holy, holy. There is none like you.’ He gets down on planet earth and there’s none of that going on. There are just some cows and donkeys and a few people standing around” (Preaching Today).

C.S. Lewis pointed out that if you want to get the hang of the Incarnation, think of how you would like to become a slug or a crab.

APPLICATION/ILLUSTRATION - Painting a Portrait

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5

Read: Philippians 2:1–11

The National Portrait Gallery in London, England, houses a treasure of paintings from across the centuries, including 166 images of Winston Churchill, 94 of William Shakespeare, and 20 of George Washington. With the older portraits, we may wonder: Is that what these individuals really looked like?

For instance, there are 8 paintings of Scottish patriot William Wallace (c. 1270–1305), but we obviously don’t have photographs to compare them to. How do we know if the artists accurately represented Wallace?

Something similar might be happening with the likeness of Jesus. Without realizing it, those who believe in Him are leaving an impression of Him on others. Not with brushes and oils, but with attitudes, actions, and relationships.

Are we painting a portrait that represents the likeness of His heart? This was the concern of the apostle Paul. “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus,” he wrote (Philippians 2:5). With a desire to accurately represent our Lord, he urged His followers to reflect the humility, self-sacrifice, and compassion of Jesus for others.

It has been said, “We are the only Jesus some people will ever see.” As we “in humility value others above [ourselves]” (v. 3), we will show the world the heart and attitude of Jesus Himself.

CONCLUSION:

- **Christ showed His love by dying for us; we show our love by living for Him.**
- The **MAJESTY** became **MENIAL** and a **MAN** in order to be our **MEDIATOR** and forever our **MASTER**. GLORY!
- **By His life, Jesus teaches us that the way up is the way down**
- How do we as a church and as individuals live selflessly rather than selfishly. There is only one way! Empowered daily by the Spirit of Christ we must make the choice each morning to have the same attitude of mind that Christ had, the attitude of a humble bond-servant, willing to die that we might live forever with Him. May that breadth and length and height and depth of love of our Lord serve to motivate us daily to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship and to not be conformed to the world but to be transformed (more and more into the image of Christ) by the renewing of our mind that we might prove what the will of God is that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Amen (Ro 12:2)
- **One thing is clear from Php 2:9-11** - You will see him and bow before him. Will it be in love and adoration as you fall gratefully before the one who loved you and died for you? Or will it be by compulsion as you are forced to your knees by the angels moments before you are removed from his presence forever? Jesus said, “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). He is your Savior who loves you and gave himself for you. Today is still the day of his grace. Won’t you come to him today?
- Bowing the knee means submission to him as Lord. Confessing with the tongue means that there is no other Lord but Jesus. Fix this thought clearly in your mind. Jesus will have the last word! He will be vindicated before the entire universe. Even his enemies will bow before him. In the end no opposition against him will stand. This is not universal salvation, but it is universal confession. Not all will be saved but all will confess that Jesus is Lord. Here is your choice: A) You can confess him now with joy as your Lord and Savior, B) Or, you will someday confess him as Lord in shame and terror.

- **Ray Pritchard tells this story, a story I would imagine several of you could tell** - Recently a friend told me about a family member who said in all seriousness, "If you ever mention Jesus to me again, I will never speak to you again." When such moments come, we need to respond with words like these: "I don't want to lose your friendship but I must tell you the truth. You were made by Jesus Christ. You owe your life to him. One day you will stand before him as your Judge. Sooner or later every knee will bow before him and confess that he is the Lord. You can bow before him today as your Savior or you can face him one day as your Judge. But you cannot escape him. The choice is yours."

- Let's summarize what this passage is telling us about Jesus Christ.

- 1) What He Was—Fully and Completely God!

- 2) What He Became—A man while retaining his deity.

- 3) What He Chose—To die a humiliating death on the cross.

- 4) What He Gained—The highest place/the greatest name/universal honor.

This is the Jesus of the Bible. This is the Jesus we worship today. This is the Jesus we call Savior and Lord. This is the true Christ of the Christian faith.

We live on a visited planet. Allow the magnitude of the Majesty becoming man to help you know that He understands everything you're going through today. And be so amazed at the Incarnation that you can't help but tell others about it. Luke 2:16-17: "So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them."

Friend, are you underwhelmed by the Christ? If you are, may I suggest that you take a fresh look at the steps the Savior took for you? When you focus on His majestic preexistence and move to His menial position and then remember that He was a man of perfection who became the mediator for people, you will be moved to respond to Him as your preeminent master. You will never be underwhelmed by the gift of Christ again. If anything, you will be overwhelmed with adoration...

Ray Pritchard - The Incomparable Christ

Almost a century ago, two famous essays were written about the life of Christ—"One Solitary Life" and "The Incomparable Life." Josh McDowell reprinted them in his book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. I have combined the two and done a slight revision because I think taken together they paint a vivid picture of who Jesus really is.

Two thousand years ago, a man was born contrary to the laws of life. He lived in poverty and was reared in obscurity. He was the child of a peasant woman and worked in a carpenter's shop until he was 30. Then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home, never wrote a book, never held public office. He never went to college and never set foot in a big city. He never traveled 200 miles from the place where he was born.

He possessed none of the usual traits that accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself. In his infancy he startled a king; in childhood he puzzled doctors; in manhood he ruled the course of nature, walked upon the billows as if on pavement, and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for his service.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed on a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth—his coat. When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed tomb.

Twenty centuries have come and gone and today he is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. He never wrote a book, yet no library could hold all the books written about him. He never wrote a song, and yet he has furnished the theme for more songs than all the songwriters combined. He never founded a college, but all the schools put together cannot boast of having as many students.

He never marshaled an army, nor drafted a soldier, nor fired a gun; and yet no leader ever had more volunteers who, under his orders, have made more rebels stack arms and surrender without a shot fired.

He never practiced psychiatry, yet he has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors far and near.

How great is his influence? All history is divided by his coming—BC and AD. We call this year 1998 in honor of his birth.

The names of past leaders have long been forgotten. The great men of Greece and Rome are dusty names in the library of time. Scientists, philosophers, kings, generals and theologians have come and gone, but the name of this Man abounds more and more.

Though time has spread 2000 years between the people of this generation and the scene of his crucifixion, yet he still lives. Herod could not destroy him, and the grave could not hold him.

He stands alone on the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, and feared by devils, as the living personal Christ, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Savior of the world.

This is the Christ of the Bible. This is the Jesus we worship. This is the true Christ of the Christian faith. This is the One in whom we have believed. He and He alone is our Lord and Savior. Millions of Christians unite in worshipping him in every nation on every continent. He is worshipped in Raxaul, India; Osaka, Japan; Sydney, Australia; Brussels, Belgium; Jos, Nigeria; Conakry, Guinea; Islamabad, Pakistan; San Jose, Costa Rica; Havana, Cuba; La Paz, Bolivia; Ottawa, Canada; St. Petersburg, Russia; London, England; Ankara, Turkey; Jerusalem, Israel; Beijing, China; Asuncion, Paraguay; and Oak Park, USA.

He and He alone is the Lord. Oh, that our hearts would sing his praise. God hasten the day until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

SERMON NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS Philippians 2:19-30

INTRODUCTION:

Our goal today is to look carefully at the lives of two men who are worth imitating, because they are both examples of unselfish, humble, sacrificial service to others in order to further the Gospel.

At St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, there is only one door into the sanctuary. Over that door is a hand-lettered sign that reads, "Servant's Entrance." There isn't any way in or out of that church except through the servant's entrance! That's not a bad reminder of the fact that every believer is called to serve our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Unlike most sports teams, the Lord's team does not have any bench warmers. Every Christian is given a first-string spot on the team, with a vital role to fulfill. A non-serving Christian is a contradiction in terms.

CONTEXT:

In chapter one and two of Philippians Paul is making a point. Paul encourages the Christians at the church in Philippi to **conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.**" (Philippians 1:27) In chapter two, Paul gives **four examples of Christian conduct worthy of the Gospel** – The supreme example of Jesus Christ (Php 2:5-11), the stellar example of Paul himself (Php 2:17-18), and then the example of two ordinary men, Timothy, half-Gentile, half-Jew (Php 2:19-24), and Epaphroditus, probably 100% Gentile (2:25-30). All these lives are superlative examples of costly selfless, sacrificial service in stark contrast to selfish service which cost nothing, that calls for no sacrifice.

OUR GOAL TODAY

Our goal today is to become imitators!

In Hebrews 6:12 God exhorts us as followers of Christ to "not be sluggish, but be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Why does Paul place such emphasis on these personal examples in Chapter 2? The single greatest teaching tool of a spiritual leader is the power of an exemplary life. Why is this so true? **Because we all tend to be led more by pattern than precept.** In other words we are much more likely to follow a flesh and blood Biblical pattern or model than we are at trying to live out a Biblical

concept, precept or principle. All of us who are parents fully grasp this basic truth - our children watch what we do and imitate us. Sometimes unfortunately they imitate what we say, much to our embarrassment. But here is the point -- Biblical principles and precepts tell us our duty. Biblical examples assure us that that it is possible to practice these principles in real life because other men and women just like us fleshed out the truth. If the Bible gave us no flesh and blood men to observe as our model, it would be very difficult to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, probably even impossible. And so we need to study carefully real saints like Timothy and Epaphroditus who put flesh on principles, who put life into precepts so that we might pattern our life after them.

D A Carson exhorts us to "Emulate those who are interested in the well-being of others, not in their own. Be on the alert for Christians who really do exemplify this basic Christian attitude, this habit of helpfulness. They are never the sort who strut their way into leadership with inflated estimates of their own importance. They are the kind who cheerfully pick up after other people. They are not offended if no one asks about them; they are too busy asking about others. They are the kind who are constantly seeking to do good spiritually, to do good materially, to do good emotionally. They are committed to the well-being of others."

So let's look quickly at what one writer calls "**A Couple of Fine Specimens**" - First we'll study the character of Timothy in Php 2:19-24 and then the character of Epaphroditus in Php 2:25-30. It should be a very interesting study, but **I warn you** it will be very convicting, for both of these men set a high standard.

PRAYER

Pray for the Spirit to give each of us illumination and personal application of the Word of Truth, that we might hold it fast and that we might be enabled to be imitators of these godly examples so that when all is said and done we might be found among those who hear "well done, My good and faithful servant." In Jesus' Name. Amen

As we study Php 2:19-30 let's be alert to examples of the practice of Php 2:3-4 (Read) **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**

So let's begin with Php 2:19 **But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.**

Do you see Paul's example of practicing Php 2:3-4? Paul is hardly looking out for his own interest in being willing to send his right-hand man Timothy to Philippi. This is selfless sacrifice on the part of both Paul and Timothy. **Why do I say that?** Recall that Paul is in prison and he depends on others like Timothy for assistance. A trip from Rome to Philippi means Timothy would be gone 3 months on dangerous journey of over 800 miles. And the return trip would take another 3 months! Paul is willing to part with his dear Timothy for almost half a year! **Why? What motivated Paul?** So Timothy could minister to the saints at Philippi. Paul was concerned for others before self! Note also the word **ALSO (so that I ALSO may be encouraged)** - It's easy to miss what Paul is saying here. The word **ALSO** indicates that the saints at Philippi will be encouraged by Timothy's presence and Paul anticipates that he would **ALSO** be comforted when Timothy returned with the message concerning the Philippian church. **And what would encourage Paul's heart?** Among other things he would be encouraged to hear that the two women in Php 4:2-3 (Euodias and Syntyche) had buried the hatchet after reading Paul's letter. The letter of course is the one we are reading which was to be carried by Epaphroditus who we learn later in this section was to be sent to Philippi immediately. Hopefully this letter would result in healing of the disunity and division. Paul expected to hear favorable things when Timothy returned! And so we see Paul's selflessness and concern for others.

Now Paul explains to the saints at Philippi why he is sending Timothy writing **For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.**" (Php 2:20)

(1) KINDRED SPIRIT

So what do we learn about Timothy? He is Paul's **kindred spirit**, a Greek word which means an "equal soul" or "same soul." Do you remember your geometry and the **isosceles** triangle? Iso is equal and thus it is a triangle with two sides of equal length. This is a picture of the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Paul knows that Timothy has the same concerns and thoughts that he does regarding the Gospel. Paul is saying to the Philippians in essence that when "**you get Timothy, you get me!**"

APPLICATION: Do you have anyone in your life you could describe as a kindred spirit? Yes, I know your spouse is your soul-mate, but what about another person of the same gender. Good friends are hard enough to find these days, but a kindred spirit is like the famous Hope diamond, rare and beautiful! As an aside, the DTS prof Howard Hendricks used to say that every Christian man needs three men in his life—a Paul, a Barnabas, and a Timothy. **Paul** represents your spiritual mentor, **Barnabas** a close personal friend and encourager, and **Timothy** a disciple who looks to you for leadership. We all need mature mentors,

encouraging friends, and willing disciples to be well-rounded Christians. And I would say that your children definitely count as your most important disciples. If you don't have a Paul or a Barnabas, ask God to bring one of each into your life. You will not regret it!

(2) GENUINE CONCERN FOR OTHERS

So first Timothy is a kindred spirit, and second he is a man who has **genuine concern** for the saints at Philippi. The word concern is the same one used in a negative sense in Php 4:6 where Paul says "Be anxious (concerned) for nothing," but here the same verb speaks of a desirable attribute of genuine concern. Timothy was truly a man who was "**other-centered**" rather than "**self-centered.**" He was not a "**me first**" man but "**me third**" servant.

LET ME GIVE YOU AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE POWER OF GENUINE CONCERN: Many years ago Dwight Morrow told a group of friends that he felt Calvin Coolidge had a real chance of becoming President of the USA. To a man they disagreed saying that Mr Coolidge was boringly quiet, lacking color and charisma. One member of the caucus reckoned people just 'would not like him.' At that point in the proceedings, Dwight Morrow's daughter Ann spoke up: 'Well, you may not like him, but I do!' Then the six-year-old girl held up a bandaged finger and said: 'He was the only one who asked me about my sore finger!' Her father nodded, and said: 'Gentlemen, there is your answer.'

APPLICATION: How would you characterize your past few weeks of your conduct - "ME FIRST" or "ME THIRD?" (Jesus, Others, Yourself) Would others describe your words and actions as SELFLESS or SELFISH? As SELF-CENTERED or OTHER-CENTERED? Remember the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus are not meant to discourage us but to encourage us that it is possible enabled by the Spirit of Christ to begin to live a supernatural selfless life like Christ. None of have arrived. We are all in varying stages of working out our salvation. Paul shows us these two examples of real men to stimulate us to live life on a higher plane.

(3) SEEKING THE INTERESTS OF CHRIST

Let's read Php 2:21 - **For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.**

First note that the clear implication of this passage is that Timothy seeks not for his own interest but for those of Christ Jesus. Again he demonstrates that it is possible enabled by the Spirit to live out Php 2:3-4! But there is another very tragic truth in this passage. To understand we need to go to Romans 1:8 written only about 3 years earlier in which Paul commended the church at Rome "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world." Wow! Three years later instead of growing outward with the Gospel, they had turned inward with greed! "Others" focus had morphed to "Me" focus! In a word they had lost their passion for lost souls. **What happened to the Roman Church?** Scripture is silent so we must be careful, but there is a phrase that says "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." It is certainly possible that the glitz and glamour of the corrupt city of Rome drowned out the anticipation of the glory of heaven and eternity with Jesus.

APPLICATION: As Warren Wiersbe wisely observed - the truth is that all us at any given moment are living either in Php 1:21 (quote it) or Php 2:21? Where are you today? If we're honest, we probably would all admit that too often in our daily lives we are much the church at Rome - seeking our interests not those of Jesus. The question I ask myself is this "Am I willing to confess my selfish tendency and beg God to fill me with His Spirit Who will give me the desire and power (of Php 2:13), to work out this aspect of my salvation in fear and trembling? If so, sometime later today or during the week meet with your Heavenly Father and beg Him to do a work in you that you might be more like Timothy in seeking the interests of Christ.

4) CHARACTER PROVEN TO BE DEPENDABLE AND RELIABLE

Let's go on to Php 2:22 - **But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.**

This is the fourth trait of Timothy we want to seek to imitate. Paul states that the church at Philippi knows that Timothy has "proved himself." The Greek word for **PROVEN** describes the testing of a metal such as a silver coin to prove that it was authentic and passed the test. It has the idea of demonstrating under pressure that you have the "**right stuff.**" God used trials to develop Timothy's (and our) character. You don't really know what you are made of until you are tested. Paul says that the church at Philippi knew from personal experience that Timothy was of proven character and thus dependable and reliable.

APPLICATION: Are you currently going through a fiery trial? Then you can take heart that God is not going to waste the trial but wants to bring you forth as pure gold. Unless you believe this is true and God is really for you and not against you, you will have a hard time counting "it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have

its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (Jamrd 1:2-4ESV) May God through His empowering Spirit grant all of us hearts to persevere and spiritual eyes to see that His trials are not sent or allowed in our lives to destroy us but to make us more like His Son, Christ Jesus. Amen.

(5) THE HEART OF A BONDSERVANT

Paul's description of Timothy is he "served with me" - And notice that the phrase is "served **with me**," **NOT** "served me" with the goal of spreading the Gospel to the whole world. **Served** is from the Greek word for a bondservant or slave. Paul says both he and Timothy were bondservants or a *doulos* which conveys of one who is no longer their own but who has been bought with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20) and whose will is now altogether and forever consumed in the will of their Master, Christ Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION OF BONDSERVANT - (Probably not enough time) There is a story told of an African slave whose master was about to slay him with a spear when a chivalrous British traveler thrust out his arm to ward off the blow, and it was pierced by the cruel weapon. As the blood spurted out he demanded the person of the slave, saying he had bought him by his suffering. To this the former master ruefully agreed. As the latter walked away, the slave threw himself at the feet of his deliverer exclaiming, "The blood-bought is now the slave of the son of pity. He will serve him faithfully." And he insisted on accompanying his generous deliverer, and took delight in waiting upon him in every possible way.

APPLICATION: Would you describe yourself as a bondservant of Christ Jesus? Is your passion to see Christ's Gospel spread throughout the world?

PAUL'S CONCLUSION:

Php 2:23-24ESV I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, 24 and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

What is Paul saying here? Therefore always begs the question "What's it there for?" It is a term of conclusion and Paul has "added up" so to speak all of the traits of Timothy and says he plans on sending him as soon as he finds out what happens regarding his imprisonment. Paul's point is that if he is not released, he will send Timothy. He then adds that he is fully confident that he himself will also (also means in addition to his sending Timothy should his trial be delayed) come to Philippi soon (while we cannot be absolutely certain, many think that he was able to visit).

APPLICATION: Paul's confident trust was **in the Lord**, and as such expressed a security independent of his circumstances and resting completely on God's will. Do you have confidence in the Lord's will for your life? Do you really believe that "He Who began a good work in you will complete it in the day of Christ Jesus?"

Lastly, we'll look at Paul's description of Epaphroditus, but time will prevent us from going into too great a detail.

Epaphroditus is derived from the name of the Greek goddess **Aphrodite** and it came to mean **charming** a name he lived up to. As an aside the goddess Aphrodite was associated with gambling so that rolling two sixes was called the 'throw of Aphrodite' and it was considered to be a clear indication that a person would win a game. Keep that thought in mind later when we talk about him risking his life.

Summary of Php 2:25-30 - This great chapter of Scripture concludes with another illustration of a saint who had attained the mind of Christ in his life and witness. Epaphroditus, who had come from Philippi with the offering of the Philippian church to Paul, is being sent with this epistle back to Philippi with a word of apostolic approbation. As Timothy would be delayed until after the outcome of the trial, he is sending Epaphroditus at once.

Let's take a quick look at the five titles Paul ascribed to Epaphroditus -

- 3 descriptions of his connection to the Apostle Paul = brother / fellow-worker / fellow-soldier
- 2 descriptions of his connection to the Philippian believers = your messenger / your minister – serving as a priest

(1) My brother - Members of the same family (We are one)

Brother is literally one born from same womb - believers in Christ are sons of their heavenly Father born again by the Spirit and united by the bond of affection and Christian love. A common origin speaks of a common level. The great apostle puts himself on a common level with this humble brother in Christ. In other words Paul doesn't look down at Epaphroditus "the delivery man" but as his "brother". **APPLICATION:** Do you see a variation of Php 2:3 here -- "regard one another as more important than yourselves?" Do you recognize others

as your brother or sister, all equal at the foot of the cross, or do you feel superior to some because you think they are less gifted than you?

(2) Fellow worker - Members of the same team

The Greek word **synergos** gives us our English word **synergy** which describes the cooperation of two or more things (people) to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their individual effects. So while "**my brother**" emphasizes a common spiritual life, "**fellow worker**" emphasizes a common synergistic, spiritual effort.

APPLICATION: Would you describe your ability to work with your brothers and sisters in Christ as **synergistic** or **antagonistic**?

(3) **Fellow soldier** - This phrase pictures Paul and Epaphroditus soldiers of the Cross, fighting shoulder to shoulder (see below) to spread the Gospel throughout the known world.

Fellow soldier described "A shoulder-to-shoulder fighting accounted for the success of Rome's armies. Prior to the triumph of Rome, men fought mostly as individuals. They often dressed alike and were armed alike, but they did not fight side by side with each other. The Roman armies did, and as a result the phalanxes of the legions were the terror of the ancient world. The soldiers marched abreast behind a solid wall of shields. And as they marched they struck their shields with their spears in unison and sang their battle songs. In such a way we are to advance in harmony against the spiritual powers arrayed against us."

APPLICATION: In past days a famous slogan was "**You're in the Army now!**" This slogan applies to all of God's children. We have been enlisted in God's army to fight the good fight of faith against the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#). Sadly many believers do not understand this fact and as a result, many believers are "wounded" in spiritual warfare. Do you recognize that you are in God's army now and that the forces of darkness have but one goal and that is to destroy your faith and your testimony? Do you daily "Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil?" (Eph 6:11)

(4) **Your messenger** (first three relate to Paul, the last two to the Philippians)

When Paul calls him "your messenger," he not saying "your errand boy" but in fact uses the word for "apostle" which literally means "one who is sent officially representing someone else" which is exactly what Epaphroditus did! Php 4:17-18 Paul acknowledges their gift that was sent and his receipt of the gift from the Philippians. And don't forget that would have taken Epaphroditus up to 3 months to travel the 800+ miles from Philippi to Rome. Clearly Epaphroditus was making a significant sacrifice to deliver the Philippian's gift to Paul. What does this say about Epaphroditus giving us an example of Php 2:3-4?

APPLICATION: Are we willing to write a letter to our missionary? Are we willing to go visit a brother or sister who has suffered an affliction?

(5) **Your minister** - Epaphroditus' mission was to carry the financial gift to Paul and then to remain indefinitely to "take care of his needs." He ministered to and with Paul as he was under house arrest in Rome. And remember if you are a Christian, God has given you a ministry. Do you know what it is?

By piling these five terms Paul makes clear that he holds this layman from Philippi in high esteem. Sometimes kids today will say to one another "**You da man!**" In essence Paul was saying that Epaphroditus was "the man" and thus worthy of every respect.

Notice that Paul didn't "pull rank" but instead went out of his way to praise Epaphroditus to his hometown people.

ILLUSTRATION: It is said that **President Ronald Reagan** had a slogan prominently displayed on his desk at the White House that read "There is no limit to how far a man can go if he doesn't care who gets the credit." The Apostle Paul had certainly learned that crucial lesson. In fact it sounds a lot like "regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Php 2:3)

APPLICATION: Wouldn't these five terms be wonderful on a tombstone? Would you like to be known as a brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, messenger, and minister? Now here's a question to really ponder and let it sink in -- What would other people say should go on your tombstone?

Php 2:26-27 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed

he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

■ (YOU WILL HAVE TO ABBREVIATE OR SUMMARIZE THIS LAST SECTION)

What is Paul explaining with the conjunction "because?" Explains why Paul thought it necessary to send him. So let's unpack this verse...

First note that Epaphroditus' **longing** is deep, for David uses this same description in the great [Psalm 42:1](#) "As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God," where "pants" is the same Greek verb used to describe Epaphroditus!

Next note that his **distress** is also deep, for the only other use of this Greek verb describes our Lord Jesus' great anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane as He anticipated the suffering of the Crucifixion.

Now what does this remind us of that Paul has already stated about an attitude that fosters unity in the Body of Christ?

Notice how Epaphroditus was less concerned about his own potentially fatal illness than he was about the effect of this news on the saints at Philippi! Paul gives us a perfect **illustration** of Php 2:3-4 "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **regard one another as more important than yourselves**; do not merely look out for **your own personal interests** (HIS SERIOUS ILLNESS), but also for **the interests of others** (THEIR WORRY OVER HIS SERIOUS ILLNESS)."

There is one other observation we don't want to miss - The reason for Epaphroditus' distress was that he was concerned that the Philippians had heard of his illness and **were themselves concerned** over their messenger for whom they in a measure held themselves responsible, which emphasizes how the Gospel had affected the previous self-centered pagans in Philippi, so that their heart was transformed causing them **ALSO** to look out for the interests of others (their concern for Epaphroditus). What an illustration of the truth Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12:26 which says "**If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.**" The apostle Paul said that all believers in Christ are part of "one body" (1 Cor 12:13). Here's where this truth begins to meddle with our lives!

APPLICATION: Let me ask you some questions that I have been forced to ask myself -- Are you truly grieved when a brother in Christ is suffering? Does it bother you when a believer stumbles into sin and is brought under the chastening hand of the Lord? Do you experience sorrow of heart when a child of God is passing through the deep waters of affliction and trial? If not, ask the Lord right now to help you by the power of His indwelling Spirit to become the kind of person who can genuinely share the heartache of others and sympathize with them. To every Christian we meet who is in some kind of distress, we should be ready to say from our hearts not just with our lips, "**I hurt for/with you**". The saints at Philippi were hurting over the news of Epaphroditus' grave illness and he in turn was deeply distressed over their suffering. This is how a healthy body of Christ functions -- Not so much a "Mutual Admiration" society but a "Mutual consolation" one! There is mutual empathy, for the word empathy in simple terms is **your pain in my heart!** Does this describe you (me)?

Php 2:30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Service Before Security.

Why do I say that? Look at the phrase "**came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life**". The phrase **risking his life** in ancient Greece was a gambler's word that meant to risk everything on the roll of the dice. Epaphroditus was willing to die for the Gospel of Jesus ("the work of Christ"). Why would we say that? Well, not only did he almost die, but it was well known in those days that if you visited a prisoner held by the Romans, the visitor was often pre-judged to also be a criminal and thus he exposed himself to potential danger. The verb used for **risking one's life** later came to be used to describe a somewhat "on the edge" group of believers called the [Parabolani](#) or "GAMBLERS" who visited the prisoners and cared for those with contagious diseases. Whenever a plague hit, the gamblers would take care of the sick and bury the dead bodies that were otherwise thrown on the streets by the townspeople.

God calls us to be gamblers for as Jesus said if you want to "gain your life you must lose it for My sake." [Mt 10:39](#) Jim Elliot, who literally lost his life for the work of Christ as a missionary in Ecuador, wrote these haunting words just before his death, "He is no fool to give up what he can not keep to gain what he can not lose."

Whether it is taking the Gospel to a dangerous place or hugging a little girl with HIV, what good is the Gospel without a few gamblers?

What are you willing to risk for Christ?

When was the last time you took yourself out of your comfort zone for the sake of the Gospel?

It is the curse of Western Christianity that we have constructed a Christian culture that effectively keeps us from risking anything for sake of the Gospel. Sometimes I think we don't take risks because we're afraid of losing our advantages.

Oswald Chambers remarked, "When you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else."

Perhaps that's our problem—we fear God too little and everything else too much.

Here is the bottom line of the message on this verse. God is looking for a few Gospel gamblers. He is searching high and low for some sanctified risk-takers. I wonder if we shouldn't start a new ministry at Wayside called "Gamblers for Jesus." And make no mistake - Everyone gambles their life on something, but only those who gamble their life on Jesus will gain eternally. I'm putting my money on Jesus. Where are you putting yours?

Beloved, the call to the church in these last days is to have the mind of Christ, following in the footsteps of men like Timothy and Epaphroditus who exemplify selfless, sacrificial service and concern for others. Along that same line there is an old hymn which exhorts us to this higher Christlike life, this life of selfless sacrifice for others for the sake of the Gospel. Listen to the words of Rise Up O Men of God...

1. Rise up, O men of God!

Have done with lesser things.

Give heart and mind and soul and strength

to serve the King of kings.

2. Rise up, O men of God!

The kingdom tarries long.

Bring in the day of brotherhood

and end the night of wrong.

3. Rise up, O men of God!

The church for you doth wait,

her strength unequal to her task;

rise up, and make her great!

4. Lift high the cross of Christ!

Tread where His feet have trod.

As brothers of the Son of Man,

rise up, O men of God!

Here is another way to set the context but it is a bit long....

Paul's thought goes like this: In Php 1:27–30 he instructs the Philippians to **"conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ."** (Philippians 1:27) in the midst of a pagan world—namely, by **"standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel"** (Php 1:27). In doing this Paul tells them not to be "alarmed in anything" (Php 1:28) and that it has been granted them to "not only believe in Christ but also suffer for His sake" (Php 1:29).

Next, in Php 2:1–4, Paul tells the Philippians how to conduct themselves worthy of the Gospel within the fellowship of the church. Specifically, they were to treat each other with selfless humility: **"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."** (Php 2:3, 4). Paul viewed all of this as so vital that in Php 2:5–11 he gave them the ultimate example of Christ, calling on them to **"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus"** and used the most exalted language to describe Christ's astonishing self-humiliation and super-exaltation (Php

2:6–11). Then, in Php 2:12–18, **on the basis of Christ's example** Paul again refocused his call for the church to **walk worthy of the gospel of Christ** “**work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure**” (Php 2:12, 13). If the church does not grumble or argue, it will show itself its people will shine like lights in the midst a crooked and twisted generation as they hold fast to the Word of Life, the Gospel (Php 2:15-16). This will be cause for multiple and mutual rejoicings! **Now in Php 2:19–30 Paul gives flesh-and-blood examples of the selfless conduct to which he is calling the Philippian church. Here are examples of men who live lives “worthy of the gospel of Christ.”**

We have just been learning about "lowliness" (Php 2:3KJV) and about "lights" (Php 2:15); and now we have in two of Paul's partners magnificent examples of both.

Up to this point, Paul has cited two examples of self-sacrificing love—the Lord Jesus and himself. Both were willing to pour out their lives to death. Two more examples of selflessness remain—Timothy and Epaphroditus

Our text tells us about two of his closest friends—two young men named Timothy and Epaphroditus. Timothy was like a son to Paul (Phil 2:22) and Epaphroditus was like a brother (Phil 2:25). Together these two friends ministered to him in prison, keeping his spirits up and encouraging him in his work for the Lord. I pause to ask another question. **Who are your friends?** Suppose a man from Mars watched you for two weeks, how would he answer that question? Your friends are important because all of us tend to become like the people we associate with. If you hang around complainers, pretty soon you'll start to complain. If your friends are selfish, their attitude will rub off on you. But if your friends are noble, their nobility will make you noble too.

Howard Hendricks used to say that every Christian man needs three men in his life—a Paul, a Barnabas, and a Timothy. **Paul** represents your spiritual mentor, **Barnabas** a close personal friend and encourager, and **Timothy** a disciple who looks to you for leadership. We all need mature mentors, encouraging friends, and willing disciples to be well-rounded Christians. So now let's look at 2 of Paul's closest friends.

Brian Bill in his sermon on Php 2:19-30 entitled "**Finding Faithful Friends**" writes "It has been said that an individual is fortunate if they have five good friends in their life time. George Barna, in his book, "What Americans Believe," wrote, "Americans are among the loneliest people on earth." Maybe it is because of our fast-paced society or it is due to our rugged American individualism but many of us struggle to find friends. A friend can encourage, affirm, and even rebuke. You can trust a friend with your secrets and with your valuables. **A person may have many acquaintances and several casual connections, but good friends are hard to find.** We were created for community and function more fully when flanked by faithful friends. The Apostle Paul did not need lettering on the back of jackets or name tags. He knew people's names and people knew him. Paul was a friend to many. In the sixteenth chapter of Romans, he lists thirty-five friends by name. In fact, in many his letters he mentions by name individuals that he has built relationships with through ministry. **He highlights two of his friends in Phil 2:19-30.**

I. (Php 2:19-24) THE EXAMPLE OF TIMOTHY -- A KINDRED SPIRIT

A. (Php 2:19-21) The Heart of an Undershepherd of Christ -- a Servant to the Flock

1. A Blessing to both Paul and the Philippians

- a. faithful in his interaction "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly"
- b. encouraging in his outlook "so that I also may be encouraged"
- c. accurate in his assessment "when I learn of your condition"

2. (Php 2:20) A Kindred Spirit to both Paul and Christ

- a. unique in this regard "For I have no one else of kindred spirit"
- b. genuinely concerned for others "who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare"
- c. totally unselfish "For they all seek after their own interests"
- d. totally committed to Christ Jesus "not those of Christ Jesus"

B. (Php 2:22) The Track Record of Faithful Service

1. Man of Proven Worth "But you know of his proven worth"

2. True Partner in the Gospel "that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel"

3. Like a Faithful Son "like a child serving his father" 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2

C. (Php 2:23-24) The Availability to Meet Needs

1. Willing to Serve wherever needed "Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me"

2. Patterned after the Model of the Apostle Paul Himself "and I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall be coming shortly"

Barclay: "Timothy's great use was that, whenever Paul wished for information from some Church, or when he wished to send advice or counsel or encouragement or guidance or rebuke, and when he could not go himself, it was Timothy whom he sent... The great use of Timothy was that Timothy was a man who could be sent anywhere, and who was always willing to go. In the hands of Timothy a message was as safe as if Paul had delivered it himself. Others might be consumed with selfish ambition, and might be concerned with their own interests alone; but Timothy's one desire was to serve Paul and to serve Christ in Christ's Church. Timothy is the patron saint of all those who are quite content with the second place, so long as they can serve."

Php 2:19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy -

Notice Paul's example in this verse - he is practicing Php 2:3-4. This is selfless sacrifice. And it is no small sacrifice for Timothy who would have to endure 3 months of dangerous travel over 800 miles. The return trip would be another 3 months! So it would seem as if the letter carried by Epaphroditus would get there first and hopefully result in some healing of the disunity and division and would be followed by the visit of Timothy to assess the effect of the Spirit inspired letter to the church at Philippi.

Timothy - name means honoring God, something he certainly did as he practiced sacrificial service in the work of Christ. Timothy was Paul's troubleshooter. Whenever there was a difficulty to which Paul could not attend personally he sent Timothy. Timothy was a vest pocket edition of the apostle Paul. (See 1 Cor 4:17, 1 Th 3:1-2). **Here is the practical application - It is important to disciple others to multiply the effect and impact of the Gospel. Are you discipling a younger believer in the Lord? This is the way the Gospel spreads!**

So that introduces a purpose clause. He would send Timothy to Philippi (after he sends Epaphroditus with this letter) and Timothy would return to Rome and report to him the things concerning the believers. Paul was so keenly interested in them that his soul would be encouraged and refreshed by what he heard. Apparently he expected to hear favorable things! We see Paul's selflessness in where his soul derives joy--from the things concerning others."

Notice the word **ALSO** - It's easy to miss what Paul is saying here - The word **ALSO** indicates that they will be encouraged by Timothy's presence and that he anticipates that he would ALSO be comforted when Timothy returns with the message concerning the Philippian church. And what would encourage Paul? To hear that Euodias and Syntyche had buried the hatch after reading Paul's letter.

Php 2:20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

This verse is one of the most glowing tributes made to anyone in the New Testament. Timothy was well known in Philippi. He was with Paul on each of his three visits to that city. Paul is explaining to the Philippian saints why he is sending Timothy to them. As we walk through these traits we need to examine ourselves - how do I compare with the example of Timothy?

Timothy's attributes as described in Php 2:20-24

1. **Kindred Spirit - 2:20**
2. **Others Focused - 2:20**
3. **Seeks interest of Christ Jesus, not self-seeking - 2:21**
4. **Tested and Approved - 2:22**
5. **Spiritual Son - 2:22**

6. Servant - 2:22

(1) Kindred Spirit - (no one else of kindred spirit) - Paul is saying that he and Timothy are "equal-souled", "same souled," "twin souled," so to speak. What does this mean? Do you remember your geometry and the isosceles triangle? Iso is equal and thus it is a triangle with two sides of equal length. This is a picture of the relationship of Paul and Timothy. He knows that Timothy has the same concerns and thoughts that Paul does. They were like minded on the essentials of the Gospel. Paul is saying to the Philippians in essence that **when "you get Timothy, you get me!"** Paul knew he could trust Timothy's words and actions amongst the Philippians. Note that being "**like-souled**" does not mean Paul and Timothy always agreed but it does mean that being alongside each other was easy so that neither had to work hard at the relationship and things flowed smoothly between them. **Do you have anyone in your life you could describe as a kindred spirit?**

One writer says that Timothy was FAT—**Faithful, Available, and Teachable!** Paul seems to imply something like that in Phil 2:20 when he says that he has no one "like him." The Greek word literally means "same-souled."

ILLUSTRATION - Spurgeon - Along the coast, in certain places, there are no harbors. But in other spots, there are bays into which vessels run at once in the time of storm. Some men present **an open natural harborage for people in distress**. You love them instinctively, and trust them unreservedly. They, on their part, welcome your confidence, and lay themselves out for your benefit. They were fashioned by nature with warm human sympathies, and these have been sanctified by grace, so that it is their vocation to instruct, to comfort, to succor, and in all ways to help spirits of a feebler order. These are the kingly men who become nursing fathers of the church. Or whoever heard of a nurse more fit for her work than Florence Nightingale? She seems as if she could do nothing else, and as if God had sent her into the world on purpose, not only that she might be a nurse herself, but that she might also teach others to nurse. Well, it is just the same in spiritual things.

(2) Genuinely Concerned for others (Php 2:20) "Others' was Timothy's outlook. "The word "genuine" means natural or legitimate. Paul says, "I have no one so genuine, so real as Timothy. He will feed the sheep; he will not fleece the sheep." Timothy's interest in the Philippian church's welfare was a reflection of his compassion. Timothy was a true shepherd. The Greek word "**concerned**" is a strong word that shows Timothy was "concerned to the point of being burdened."

Timothy was truly a man who was more "**other-centered**" rather than "**self-centered**." He was not a "**me first**" man but "**me third**" servant. -- How would you characterize your past few weeks of your conduct, was it in a manner worthy of the Gospel? More specifically would it be "ME FIRST" or more like "ME THIRD?" Would others describe your actions as SELFLESS or SELFISH? As SELF-CENTERED or OTHER-CENTERED? Remember the examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus are not meant to discourage us but to encourage us that it is possible enabled by the Spirit of Christ to begin to live a supernatural selfless life like Christ. None of have arrived. We are all in varying stages of working out our salvation. Paul shows us these two examples of real men to stimulate us to live life on a higher plane.

What Paul had been calling for in Php 2:3-5 (see **note** Php 2:3-4; 2:5), both he and Timothy were carrying out in everyday life. They were not just putting on a show of affection for these believers, they were sincerely concerned about their estate. It is a sign of spiritual maturity to not merely have much knowledge but to care much, to live out that knowledge.

ILLUSTRATION OF GENUINELY CONCERNED - Many years ago Dwight Morrow told a group of friends that he felt Calvin Coolidge had a real chance of becoming President of the USA. To a man they disagreed saying that Mr Coolidge was boringly quiet, lacking color and charisma. One member of the caucus reckoned people just 'would not like him.' At that point in the proceedings, Dwight Morrow's daughter Ann spoke up: 'Well, you may not like him, but I do!' Then the six-year-old girl held up a bandaged finger and said: 'He was the only one who asked me about my sore finger!' Her father nodded, and said: 'Gentlemen, there is your answer.'

ILLUSTRATION OF GENUINELY CONCERNED - A few years ago I stood on the banks of a river in South America and watched a young man in western clothes climb out of a primitive canoe. The veteran missionary with whom I was traveling beamed at the young man and whispered to me, "The first time I saw him he was a naked Indian kid standing right on this bank, and he pulled in my canoe for me. God gave me a real concern for him, and eventually he came to Christ, committed himself to the Lord's work and is just returning home after graduating from seminary in Costa Rica." I could understand the beam on the missionary's face, and I think Paul beamed when he talked of his men. And he had good cause to be thrilled with them." (Laugh Again)

Others focused - That was this young man's outlook. When Sir Bartle Frere returned from India, the carriage was sent to the village station to bring him to his home. When the new footman, but newly engaged, asked

how he should recognise Sir Bartle, his aged mother said. "Look out for somebody helping someone else." Sure enough, when the London train had drawn in, the manservant observed a gentleman assisting an old lady to the platform and then jumping back into the carriage to fetch out her luggage. Going straight up to him, the footman enquired, "Sir Bartle?" Yes; it was he. What a lovely reputation to have! To be known as one who is always on the look-out to see when, and how, one can help others.

(3) Seeks interest of Christ Jesus, not self-seeking. (Php 2:21)

Paul goes on to say that Timothy cared so deeply that other individual's concern paled in comparison. Look at Php 2:21: "For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus." But no so with Timothy - His life was Jesus, Others, and himself, in that order. Timothy is in marked contrast to "all (who) seek after their own interests, always looking out for Number One. I - is their god; Self - is their goal; Me, Me, Me - is their slogan. Well now, Timothy was not one of these - as the implication of the passage shows.

Remember Paul is giving us examples of how to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel and he makes it clear that one of the marks of a growing Christian is the ability to say "Me-Third."

For they all seek after their own interests - This is an especially sad commentary in light of what Paul had written to the Roman church only 3 years earlier - "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world." Wow! Three years later instead of growing outward with the Gospel, they had turned inward with greed! Others focus had inverted to "Me" focus! They had lost their passion for lost souls. What happened to the Roman Church? Scripture is silent so we must be careful, but there is a phrase that says "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." It is certainly possible that the glitz and glamor of the corrupt Roman world drowned out the anticipation of the glory of heaven and eternity with Jesus. The lesson is clear - if any man or woman thinks he or she stands, then they had better take heed lest they fall!

Warren Wiersbe rightly said that "In a very real sense, **all** of us live either in Philippians 1:21 (note) or Philippians 2:21!" (To live is Christ, to die is gain versus "seek after their own gain.")

(4) Tested and Approved - (you know of his proven worth)

Let's continue on in Php 2:22. Paul states that the church at Philippi knows that Timothy has "proved himself." This term means "proof after testing." Timothy was a seasoned veteran and had survived and thrived through hardship. He was Paul's "trouble shooter" in Corinth (I Cor 4:17), Thessalonica (I Thes 3:2), Ephesus (I Tim 1:3-4), and Philippi.

(5) Spiritual Son. (like a child serving his father)

Paul then likens his relationship with Timothy to that of a son and a father. Listen to what Paul calls him in other letters: "**my true child in the faith**" (1 Timothy 1:2), "**my beloved son**" (2 Timothy 1:2), and "**my beloved faithful child in the Lord**" (1 Cor 9:17). In that culture, sons learned their trade and their faith from their fathers. Paul cared deeply for Timothy and was his spiritual mentor and father-figure

COMMENT: Closely related to "Spiritual Son" is the fact that Timothy was also Paul's disciple as well as being a disciple of Jesus - Look at 2 Ti 3:10-11-[note](#) = "Now you followed ([parakoloutheo](#) - literally = followed closely, cf use in 1 Ti 4:6) my teaching (WHAT I SAY), conduct (HOW I BEHAVE), purpose (WHY I DO IT), faith, patience, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!)"

(6) Servant. (he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel) Noticed that Paul did not say that Timothy "served me in the work of the Gospel." Paul inserted a very important word – **with**. Timothy and Paul were a team of servants. They both had servant's hearts and they gave themselves away in the caring for the needs of others. Timothy had surrendered his own personal plans to serve with Paul. He was not interested in being a superstar, just a servant. He wanted to be faithful, not famous.

Php 2:21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

For - explains another reason for sending Timothy. His glowing tribute is followed by a their terrible indictment! No one else qualified for the task. What disqualified them? They were primarily seeking after the things which pertained to their SELF, not the things which pertained to their SAVIOR. The genitives here appear to be genitives of possession. These believers were seeking after the things

which belonged to them (or so they thought). They were concerned about saving their own lives and making this time on earth comfortable. While they were seeking after their own things, the things of Christ were passing them by. How opposite to Phil. 2:3-5!

If Paul were to try to send someone else on that long hazardous journey they would have said "What do I get out of this? Are there any risks to me personally? What are the wages? What are the conditions?" They all seek their own. Their interest is not Jesus', it is their own. They may have had an interest "if it was convenient," and they could do it in their spare time. Their attitude was "if it does not cost anything, I will do it." This is Christianity as a sideline, not Christianity at the core.

Selfishness preempts spiritual priority. To put priority on Jesus Christ is the essence of Christianity.

APPLICATION: Jesus Christ must come before our wives or husbands and children. Jesus Christ must come before our relationships and our jobs. This idea eliminates almost all Christians at the twenty first century. No wonder Christians have such a difficult time living the Christian life! We try to live it the hard way, "All seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus." This is selfishness, one of the greatest obstructions to the Christian life. To put self first is to dethrone Christ, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). How many of us are so dedicated to the person of Christ to place him before ourselves?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer speaking to our natural tendency even as believers toward selfishness, said "We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and canceling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions. We may pass them by, preoccupied with our more important tasks . . . It is a strange fact that Christians frequently consider their work so important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them . . . But it is part of the discipline of humility that we must not spare our hand where it can perform a service and that we do not assume our schedule is our own to manage, but allow it to be rearranged by God." (**Ed:** Bonhoeffer clearly practiced what he preached, being martyred by the demonic Nazis just a few weeks before the prison camps were liberated by the Allies.)

Php 2:22 But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.

The CSB has "proven character" which is accurate and easier to understand than proven worth.

Proven worth - Dokime describes approval after testing as of gold or silver. The idea is that when you put metal through a fiery testing and it comes out on the other side persevering and enduring, what you call that metal is "proven" or "authentic" or "genuine." When you go through tribulation, and your faith is tested, and it perseveres, what you get is a wonderful sense of authenticity.

Served with me - Note the phrase is "served **with** me," **NOT** "served me" - They were both bondservants, having relinquished their rights to serve their Master Christ Jesus. *Doulos* conveys the idea of the slave's close, binding ties w/ his master, belonging to him, obligated (& desirous) to do his will, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another,

Harry Ironside wrote that Paul's description of serving as a bondservant ""does not mean that his was a service of bondage. Rather he served in the whole-hearted obedience of one who realized that he had been "bought with a price," even the precious blood of Christ.

ILLUSTRATION OF BONDSERVANT - There is a story told of an African slave whose master was about to slay him with a spear when a chivalrous British traveler thrust out his arm to ward off the blow, and it was pierced by the cruel weapon. As the blood spurted out he demanded the person of the slave, saying he had bought him by his suffering. To this the former master ruefully agreed. As the latter walked away, the slave threw himself at the feet of his deliverer exclaiming, "The blood-bought is now the slave of the son of pity. He will serve him faithfully." And he insisted on accompanying his generous deliverer, and took delight in waiting upon him in every possible way. Thus had Paul, thus has each redeemed one, become the bondservant of Jesus Christ. We have been set free to serve, and may well exclaim with the Psalmist "O LORD, surely I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid, You have loosed (Lxx = *diarresso* = tear one's clothes as sign of grief, of chains or fetters broken - Lk 8:29-note) my bonds." (Ps 116:16).

Php 2:23 Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me;

Therefore - In view of the wonderful spiritual attributes Paul has mentioned in Php 2:19-22, Paul reiterates his desire to send Timothy to the Philippians in his place as his representative. As mentioned above when Timothy was sent to them, it was as if Paul

himself were coming.

Php 2:24 and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

What does the little phrase "in the Lord" mean? In this context (and Php 2:19) clearly the idea is that Paul was willing to submit himself to the will of the Lord (which is always good and acceptable and perfect - Ro 12:2b). As James writes "Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that." (James 4:15) James says saints should have a heart attitude of total dependence on God's will. In fact we act presumptuously--and possibly calamitously--when we leave God and His will out of our plans and prayers! How often do I pray something with the attitude of "if it be Thy will?" (Not often enough in my case!) Paul was willing to place himself in the hands of God. Whatever the will of God, he would go with that. If God releases him from prison he will go to Philippi to resolve the church conflict. If God decided to keep him in prison, he would send Timothy to Philippi. Paul operated on the principle "if the Lord wills." Paul's security was independent of circumstances and rested completely on God's will.

Php 2:25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

MEET EPAPHRODITUS MR. CHARMING

Epaphroditus is derived from the name of the Greek goddess **Aphrodite** and it came to mean **charming** a name he lived up to. As an aside the goddess Aphrodite was associated with gambling so that rolling two sixes was called the 'throw of Aphrodite' and it was considered to be a clear indication that a person would win a game. Keep that thought in mind later when we talk about him risking his life.

Summary of Php 2:25-30 - This great chapter of Scripture concludes with another illustration of a saint who had attained the mind of Christ in his life and witness. Epaphroditus, who had come from Philippi with the offering of the Philippian church to Paul, is being sent with this epistle back to Philippi with a word of apostolic approbation. As Timothy would be delayed until after the outcome of the trial, he is sending Epaphroditus at once.

Let's take a quick look at the five titles Paul ascribed to Epaphroditus -

- 3 descriptions of his connection to the Apostle Paul = brother / fellow-worker / fellow-soldier
- 2 descriptions of his connection to the Philippian believers = your messenger / your minister – serving as a priest

(1) My brother - Members of the same family (We are one)

Brother is literally one born from same womb - believers in Christ are sons of their heavenly Father born again by the Spirit and united by the bond of affection and Christian love.

Illustration - Have you ever heard of **Beta Upsilon Chi** (Brothers Under Christ) is the name of a Christian fraternity founded at the University of Texas in 1985. The fraternity's verse is "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!" (Ps 133:1)

Paul doesn't look down at Epaphroditus "the delivery man" but as his "brother". As believers, we are all on the same level, all born by the same Spirit (Jn 3:3-5) and so we are all brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. And this is the essence of "fellowship" (**koinonia**) which has as its root **koinos** or common. We are in spiritual fellowship because we all have the same thing in common, our relationship with Jesus Christ.

(2) Fellow worker - Members of the same team (He is my equal)

The Greek word **synergos** gives us our English word **synergy** which describes the interaction or cooperation of two or more things (people) to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects. So while "my brother" emphasizes a common spiritual life, "fellow worker" emphasizes a common synergistic, spiritual effort.

Paul and Epaphroditus had an effective, synergistic partnership in ministering to the church of Philippi and beyond.

(3) Fellow soldier - Warriors for the same cause (He is sold out to Christ), fighting shoulder to shoulder (like the picture of the Roman phalanx side by side - which enabled Rome to conquer the world). Let me remind you that "though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,
(2 Co 10:3-5ESV)

This word pictures saints intimately fighting **side by side** against both seen and unseen foes.

In past days a famous slogan was "[You're in the Army now!](#)" This slogan applies to all of God's children. They have been enlisted in His army to fight the good fight of faith against the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#). Sadly many believers do not understand the fact that when we were "**rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,**" (Col 1:13-[note](#)), the kingdom of darkness now actively opposes us. As a result, many believers are "wounded" in spiritual warfare because they are ignorant of the invisible battle that is raging. Like my old medical school professor used to say when I would say I did not know the answer to his question -- "You can't not know!" Well that was true in medicine, but it is far more true in spiritual warfare.

Fellow soldier described "A shoulder-to-shoulder fighting accounted for the success of Rome's armies. Prior to the triumph of Rome, men fought mostly as individuals. They often dressed alike and were armed alike, but they did not fight side by side with each other. The Roman armies did, and as a result the phalanxes of the legions were the terror of the ancient world. The soldiers marched abreast behind a solid wall of shields. And as they marched they struck their shields with their spears in unison and sang their battle songs. In such a way we are to advance in harmony against the spiritual powers arrayed against us."

(4) Your messenger (first three relate to Paul, the last two to the Philippians)

When Paul calls him "your messenger," he not saying "your errand boy" but in fact uses the glorious Greek word for "apostle" which literally means "one who is sent officially representing someone else" which is exactly what Epaphroditus did! Paul did not look down on him, but to the contrary heaps glowing descriptions of his godly character. Usually the term means an apostle designated by Jesus Christ as in the "12 apostles" or the "Apostle Paul." Here Paul uses the same term in a more general sense—that Epaphroditus is an "apostle" sent by the Philippians to aid another apostle in Rome. High praise indeed!

Php 4:17-18 Paul acknowledges their gift that was sent and his receipt of the gift from the Philippians - Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. 18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, **having received from Epaphroditus** what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

Background - Realize that it would take up to 3 months to travel the 800+ miles from Philippi to Rome so it was not like Epaphroditus was not making a significant sacrifice to deliver the Philippian's gift to Paul. What does this say about Epaphroditus giving us an example of Php 2:3-4? Are we willing to write a letter to our missionary? Are we willing to go visit a brother or sister who has suffered an affliction? Keep in mind that Epaphroditus was willing to spend over 3 months to serve as a messenger (really 6 months when one includes the return trip carrying Paul's letter to the saints).

(5) Your minister - Epaphroditus' mission was to carry the financial gift to Paul and then to remain indefinitely to "take care of his needs." He ministered to and with Paul as he was under house arrest in Rome. And remember if you are a Christian, God has given you a ministry. Do you know what it is?

By piling these five terms Paul makes clear that he holds this layman from Philippi in high esteem. Sometimes kids today will say to one another "You da man!" In essence Paul was saying that Epaphroditus was "the man" and thus worthy of every respect.

Notice that Paul didn't "pull rank" but instead went out of his way to praise Epaphroditus to his hometown people. It is said that **President Ronald Reagan** had a slogan prominently displayed on his desk at the White House that read "There is no limit to how far a man can go if he doesn't care who gets the credit." The Apostle Paul had certainly learned that crucial lesson. In fact it sounds a lot like "regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Php 2:3)

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- Wouldn't these five terms be wonderful on a tombstone?
- Would you like to be known as a brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, messenger, and minister?
- Now here's a question to really ponder and let it sink in -- What would other people say should go on your tombstone?

Additional Notes

The question arises as to why Paul showed such honor (in his five-fold description) to Epaphroditus especially since the Philippians clearly knew him and had entrusted him with the gift for Paul? Tony Merida writes "Why the emphasis on honor? This emphasis is probably due to the fact that this was a culture based more on honor and shame than our American culture is. Think about it. The church sends their representative to the famous apostle. When he arrives, he has been sick, he almost dies, and he has to go home sooner rather than later. The church might think of him as an embarrassment. "We should have sent someone else!" they may have said. But Paul covers for him and says Epaphroditus deserves a hero's welcome." (Exalting Jesus in Philippians)

Warren Wiersbe emphasizes that Epaphroditus was a "balanced Christian!" - Balance is important in the Christian life. Some people emphasize "fellowship" so much that they forget the furtherance of the Gospel. Others are so involved in defending the "faith of the Gospel" that they neglect building fellowship with other believers. Epaphroditus did not fall into either of these traps. He was like Nehemiah, the man who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with his sword in one hand and his trowel in the other (Neh. 4:17). You cannot build with a sword nor battle with a trowel! It takes both to get the Lord's work accomplished.

ILLUSTRATION **Dr. H.A. Ironside** used to tell about a group of believers who thought only of **fellowship.** They had little concern for reaching the lost or for defending the faith against its enemies. In front of their meeting place they hung a sign: **JESUS ONLY.** But the wind blew away some of the letters, and the sign read —**US ONLY.** It was a perfect description of a group of people who were not balanced Christians.

The Pattern of Epaphroditus - Risk Taking in Ministry – (Php 2:25-30)

Only a very few people enthusiastically embrace risks. Most of us choose security.

I. Profile of Epaphroditus (Php 2:25) -

3 descriptions of his connection to the Apostle Paul - brother / fellow-worker / fellow-soldier -

2 descriptions of his connection to the Philippian believers your messenger / your minister – serving as a priest

II. Perils of Epaphroditus - (Php 2:26-27)

Emotional anguish and stress – wondering what the Philippians were thinking about him since he had been unable to communicate and explain his delay -

Physical sickness to the point of death; prolonged illness; very intense - Burden of the church building work (2 Cor. 6:3ff)

III. Perception of Epaphroditus -

How did the Philippians view him -

How did Epaphroditus view himself

IV. Praise Due Epaphroditus -

Deserved a Hero's Welcome – maybe people had viewed him negatively since they had not heard any word of what was happening -

Deserved to be Held in High Regard – often risk takers can be perceived as having a screw loose when really their intensity reflects their passion to serve the Lord

Philippians 2:26-27 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick for indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

Paul was making certain that the Philippians understood the sacrifice that Epaphroditus had made for the cause of Jesus Christ. He specifically wanted the saints at Philippi that this was not just a cold but an illness that could have taken his life had not God intervened.

What is Paul explaining with the conjunction because? Explains why Paul thought it necessary to send him

So let's unpack this verse...

First note that Epaphroditus' **longing** is deep, for David uses this same description in the great Psalm 42:1 "A As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God," where "pants" is the same Greek verb used to describe Epaphroditus!

Next note that his **distress** is also deep, for the only other use of this Greek verb describes our Lord Jesus' great anguish to the point of shedding drops of sweat like blood in the Garden of Gethsemane as He anticipates the suffering of the Crucifixion.

Now what does this remind us of that Paul has already stated about an attitude that fosters unity in the Body of Christ?

Notice how Epaphroditus was less concerned about his own potentially fatal illness than he was about the effect of this news on the saints at Philippi! Paul gives us a perfect **illustration** of Php 2:3-4 "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **regard one another as more important than yourselves**; do not merely look out for **your own personal interests** (HIS SERIOUS ILLNESS), but also for **the interests of others** (THEIR WORRY OVER HIS SERIOUS ILLNESS)."

There is one other observation we don't want to miss - This fact also emphasizes how the Gospel had affected the previous self-centered pagans in Philippi, so that their heart was now transformed causing them ALSO to look out for the interests of others and not just their own interests (for Epaphroditus). What an illustration of the truth Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12:26 which says "**If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.**" The apostle Paul said that all believers in Christ are part of "one body" (1 Cor 12:13). Here's where this truth begins to meddle with our lives! Let me ask you some questions that I have been forced to ask myself --

- Are you truly grieved when a brother in Christ is suffering?
- Does it bother you when a believer stumbles into sin and is brought under the chastening hand of the Lord?
- Do you experience sorrow of heart when a child of God is passing through the deep waters of affliction and trial?

If not, ask the Lord right now to help you by the power of His indwelling Spirit to become the kind of person who can genuinely share the heartache of others and sympathize with them. Yes, to every Christian we meet who is in some kind of distress, we should be ready to say from our hearts not just with our lips, "**I hurt for you**". The saints at Philippi were hurting over the news of Epaphroditus' grave illness and he in turn was deeply distressed over their suffering. This is how a healthy body of Christ functions -- Not so much a "Mutual Admiration" society but a "Mutual consolation" one! There is mutual empathy, for the word empathy in simple terms is your pain in my heart! Does this describe you (me)?

The hurting ones need sympathy,
They need to know we're there;
A quiet word, a tender touch
Assures them that we care. —DJD

The term "**to the point of death**" literally means "next door" to death. **He was at death's door.** He and death were "next door neighbors." But enter Jehovah Rapha, the God Who Heals, the Father of mercies Who bestowed mercy on Epaphroditus in healing him. When you have been very sick and were healed perhaps by good physicians and pharmaceuticals, did you realize that behind it all was the mercy of God. Mercy sees a need, feels compassion and seeks to meet that need. Have you ever thanked God for His mercy in healing you? And notice that God's mercy in healing Epaphroditus bestowed mercy on Paul who clearly was concerned he might die which would have produced sorrow upon sorrow (sorrow piled high upon more sorrow). Note also that Paul had the apostolic gift of healing but did not utilize that gift.

The example of Epaphroditus (mentioned only twice in Scripture) begs a searching question - What are you living for? For yourself or for others? Do you like this brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, servant and minister, consider others more important than yourself? Do you do look out only for your own personal interests, or do you look out also for the interests of others? The honored name of **Epaphroditus** has been handed down to us by the pen of inspiration, and his precious service has been recorded and the record of it read by untold millions, while the names of the self-seekers, the self-important, the pretentious of every age are lost in eternal oblivion. Do you want your life to count for eternity. The emulate the empathy of Epaphroditus and your legacy will last throughout eternity!

Php 2:28 Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you.

Who is concerned about whom? Paul, the man in prison is concerned for the saints free at Philippi. This is another excellent example of Paul's Christlike mindset in considering the Philippians more important than himself (Php 2:3 "regard one another as more important than yourselves."). And don't miss that Epaphroditus had been sent to bring a gift and to minister to Paul's need (Php 2:25), and yet Paul gladly, even eagerly sends him - see Paul's example of selfless, sacrificial concern for others, a pattern we would all do well to imitate in reliance on the Spirit's enabling power. And notice also that the messenger Epaphroditus had come with a gift, but will return with a missive (a letter, especially an official one) that will be read and loved by millions of saints. When we enter wholeheartedly into selfless, sacrificial service to the Lord, only eternity will tell the truth of the value of our sacrifice and show us that it was more than worth it. What is the Lord calling you to do for His Kingdom? Don't tarry. Join the ranks of men like Timothy and Epaphroditus, and millions of other saints who will hear "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

Gutzke - The prisoner needed someone to help him, to bring him food and drink, and to take care of him. The people in Philippi had sent Epaphroditus to do this, and Epaphroditus had been doing it. When Epaphroditus heard that the people back home were unhappy and worried because they had heard he was sick, he wanted to go and tell them he was all right. When Paul considered it and thought about it, he felt that was the thing to do. He himself was in danger and in need. Yet he sends the man home. Why? Because they were worried. If ever anyone needed a boost, it would have been Paul. He was standing, as it were, in the very presence of death, yet he sends this young man home so the people there will be strengthened."

Php 2:29 Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;

Paul is saying Epaphroditus deserved a hero's welcome!

Receive him - The idea is put out the welcome home mat for him.

Hold him in high regard - Epaphroditus sacrificed himself with no thought of reward, and Paul encouraged the church to hold him in honor to the glory of God.

Php 2:30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

SERVICE BEFORE SECURITY

I want to give this last verse a title - **Service Before Security**. Why do I say that? Look at the phrase "**came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life**". The phrase **risking his life** in ancient Greece was a gambler's word that meant to risk everything on the roll of the dice. Epaphroditus was willing to die for the Gospel of Jesus ("the work of Christ"). Why would we say that? Well, not only did he almost die, but it was well known in those days that if you visited a prisoner held by the Romans, the visitor was often pre-judged to also be a criminal and thus he exposed himself to potential danger. The verb used for **risking one's life** later came to be used to describe a somewhat "on the edge" group of believers called the [Parabolani](#) or "GAMBLERS" who visited the prisoners and cared for those with contagious diseases. Whenever a plague hit, the gamblers would take care of the sick and bury the dead bodies that were otherwise thrown on the streets by the townspeople.

God calls us to be gamblers for as Jesus said if you want to "gain your life you must lose it for My sake." (Mt 10:39) Jim Elliot, who literally lost his life for the work of Christ as a missionary in Ecuador, wrote these haunting words just before his death, "He is no fool to give up what he can not keep to gain what he can not lose."

Whether it is taking the Gospel to a dangerous place or hugging a little girl with HIV, what good is the Gospel without a few gamblers?

What are you willing to risk for Christ?

When was the last time you took yourself out of your comfort zone for the sake of the Gospel?

It is the curse of Western Christianity that we have constructed a Christian culture that effectively keeps us from risking anything for sake of the Gospel. Sometimes I think we don't take risks because we're afraid of losing our advantages.

Oswald Chambers remarked, "When you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else."

Perhaps that's our problem—we fear God too little and everything else too much.

Here is the bottom line of the message on this verse. God is looking for a few Gospel gamblers. He is searching high and low for some sanctified risk-takers. I wonder if we shouldn't start a new ministry at Wayside called "Gamblers for Jesus." And make no mistake - Everyone gambles their life on something, but only those who gamble their life on Jesus will gain eternally. I'm putting my money on Jesus. Where are you putting yours?

Beloved, the call to the church in these last days is to have the mind of Christ, following in the footsteps of men like Timothy and Epaphroditus who exemplify selfless, sacrificial service and concern for others. Along that same line there is an old hymn which exhorts us to this higher Christlike life, this life of selfless sacrifice for others for the sake of the Gospel. Listen to the words of Rise Up O Men of God...

1. Rise up, O men of God!

Have done with lesser things.

**Give heart and mind and soul and strength
to serve the King of kings.**

2. Rise up, O men of God!

The kingdom tarries long.

**Bring in the day of brotherhood
and end the night of wrong.**

3. Rise up, O men of God!

**The church for you doth wait,
her strength unequal to her task;
rise up, and make her great!**

4. Lift high the cross of Christ!

Tread where His feet have trod.

**As brothers of the Son of Man,
rise up, O men of God!**