

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Conducting Ourselves in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel Philippians 2:1-4 Part 4

The theme of this epistle is joy. In its four very brief chapters the words “joy” or “rejoice”, are used 16 times. This is a lot of joy and stands in stark contrast to the experience of the world. For the world, joy is intermittent and fleeting but for the believer it should be constant and abiding. What did Jesus share with His disciples in **John 15:11** “**These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.**” This morning what should you be experiencing? Joy

Our primary source of joy is produced in us by the Holy Spirit as we receive and obey God’s Word. But there is also a secondary source of joy which we hopefully will also experience. It is a joy which is produced in us as we witness fellow believers, whom we care about, receiving and obeying God’s Word. Joy is not just about what God is doing in us but what God is doing in others (3 John 1:4). Certainly the Apostle John made this clear to us in **3 John 1:4**, “**I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.**” The joy that we can experience when we choose to walk with God is a great treasure bestowed on us in Christ but the joy we experience when others, that we care about, are choosing to walk with God is also a wonderful treasure that we should be able to enjoy as well.

The joy that we can have as we walk in the Spirit is always available to us because it is fully dependent upon our choices. But the joy that comes into our lives because of the behavior of others is dependent on their choices.

This truth will be brought home to us in the passage we will be looking at this weekend. We are now studying **Phil. 1:27-2:18**. In this section of Scripture Paul shares with us what it means to “conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

The first element of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel is “standing firm in one spirit, with one mind” (Philippians 1:27-30). Standing firm in one spirit, with one mind means that we will strive together for the faith of the gospel while being in no way alarmed by our opponents.

The second element of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel is our pursuit of church unity (Philippians 2:1-4). We see this truth shared with us in Philippians 2:1-4 which is the passage we are now presently examining. Let us read this passage, “**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, (2) make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. (3) Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; (4) do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**” This passage is not simply a call to unity but a formula for unity.

We are in the process of breaking down this formula for unity in Philippians 2:1-4 into it’s basic components. The first component in the formula for church unity is right motivations. Let us read **Philippians 2:1** “**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.**”

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Each of these “ifs” in this verse, are what grammarians call first class conditions or in other words “the condition of reality. With this understanding the verse could be read this way, “Because” there is encouragement in Christ, “because” there is consolation of love, “because” there is fellowship of the Spirit, “because” there is affection and compassion.” Because of all these what? Look at **V. 2** **“Make my joy complete, by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in the spirit, intent on one purpose.”** In other words because of all these things in **V. 1** which are in fact true, because of all the blessings listed for us in **V. 1** that the Lord has lovingly poured out upon our lives, then strive for the unity that is described in **V. 2**.

The second component in the formula for church unity is a right description (Philippians 2:2). What Paul describes as unity and how the world understands unity is two different things. How does Paul describe the unity for which we should be striving? He describes unity in Phil. 2:2 by listing for us a number of different marks or characteristics of unity.

The first mark of unity is “being of the same mind” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Let us look at **Phil. 2:2** **“Make my joy complete by being of the same mind**” When Paul used this phrase it did not simply mean that he wanted people to agree on such things as, if they wanted ice cream or where they would buy that ice cream it was far more than that. To help us understand what Paul meant by this phrase we considered how Paul used the word “mind” throughout the New Testament and we concluded that Paul used the word “mind” to describe a person’s whole disposition. It not only involved the person’s thoughts but his feelings and ultimately his will which results in him striving after one thing, What did we conclude was the one thing that Paul wants us to strive for? The one thing that Paul wants us to strive for is to live our lives solely for the purpose of pleasing the Lord rather than ourselves.

This weekend we will now go on and complete the description of unity as Paul explains it in **Philippians 2:2**. My hope for this message is not only that we would strive for the unity that is being described but that we would also experience the joy that comes through that unity. What is the second mark of unity?

The second mark of unity is “maintaining the same love.” This mark or characteristic is not an entirely different characteristic but rather it simply flows from us being of the same mind. How do we know this? “being of the same mind” is the main verb in the sentence. “Maintaining the same love” is a participial phrase and simply modifies the main verb.

If we are of the same mind then we will invariably seek to love one another in the same kind of way that we have been loved by God. This is what Paul means when he says, “maintaining the same love.” Since we have enjoyed the encouragement of Christ, since we have enjoyed the consolation of His love, since we have enjoyed the fellowship of the Spirit, since we have enjoyed the affection and compassion of the Spirit, all of these things being an expression of God’s love for us, then let us as those who are seeking to please the Lord rather than ourselves maintain the same kind of love for one another.

The word for love (AGAPE) refers to the unconditional love of God. Just as we have been loved unconditionally by God in a myriad of different ways, a few of them mentioned in verse one, let us maintain that same kind of unconditional love for one another.

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Are you loving the people in this fellowship in this way? I hope that you would be able to say, “Yes! I am.”

In order to do this it first of all means that you have not kept the people of this fellowship at arms length. How can we say that we are loving our brothers and sisters in Christ with the same kind of love with which we have been loved by God if we do not make an effort to get connected to the people in this fellowship. Didn't the Lord in His love for us leave the glory of heaven so that He could identify with us and provide for us? If we are of the same mind and maintaining the same love for one another then certainly we should be able to see a concerted effort on our part to reach out to people within this church. Not waiting for them to reach out toward us but for us to reach out toward them. But you might say I have done that and people don't seem very responsive so I just don't make the effort any more. Let me ask you this question. Did Christ stop reaching out to people when they failed to respond to Him. No! And neither should we. But you might say I have certain limitations, I have 20 children living at home, I have to work two full time jobs, six days a week in order to supply for their needs. The only time I have to reach out to people in this church is on Saturday night or Sunday morning so I am severely limited in what I can do. Well even if this is true, which is certainly not the case for the vast majority of the people in this fellowship, you can still do what you can do. You can still reach out to the people in this fellowship when you are here by extending a greeting (1 Thess. 5:26).

If you are going to make a claim to maintaining the same love it does not only involve reaching out and identifying with the people around you, being willing to become familiar with them, it means responding to the needs that you see in their lives. People have needs. It may not be simply a material need that you might meet but perhaps a need for encouragement through a kind word or gesture.

Certainly Christ was not passive in terms of people, He certainly has not been passive with us, and we cannot be passive when it comes to meeting the needs of people. In fact hopefully we will be fortunate enough that the Lord would bless us with the opportunity to care for another person even in an extraordinary way. Not necessarily a Christian brother or sister who we like a whole lot or may serve us in some way but perhaps a person who may be difficult for us to love and who may not ever be able to serve us at all. Loving them in the same way that Christ loved us.

If we could as an outflow of being of the same mind find ourselves maintaining the same love it would give dramatic evidence to the world that we are the disciples of Christ. What does **John 13:34-35** say “**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (35) By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.**”

This is what should be present. What should not be present is bickering or contentious relationships within the church. When we experience a breakdown in our relationships with each other that results in personal conflicts within the church someone or several individuals have failed to live their lives solely to please the Lord and therefore they could not be described as being of the same mind nor maintaining the same love. What is the third mark of unity?

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The third mark of unity is “united in spirit intent on one purpose.” Again this mark or characteristic is not an entirely different characteristic than “being of the same mind.” Rather “united in spirit intent on one purpose” flows out from “being of the same mind” in just the same way as “maintaining the same love” did. Again how do we know this? We know this because “being of the same mind” which is the first phrase in the verse contains the main verb in the sentence. “**United in spirit intent on one purpose**” is a participial phrase and modifies the main verb. The participle being the word translated “intent.”

The word translated “united in spirit” (SUMP SUCHOS) means “one souled.” But “one-souled” in what way? Being one souled in the sense that we together are intent on one purpose. What does the verse say, “united in spirit (or one souled) intent on one purpose.” What is that purpose? The verse is not absolutely clear. But in light of the fact that this part of the description flows from “being of the same mind” we can conclude that it is not identical to it. I would therefore have to believe that it is something more specific than simply purposing to set our mind on things pleasing to the Lord. And if we were to look for something in this epistle that would be more specific what would that be? I believe that it would be our passion as a church to get the gospel out no matter what.

Why would I say this? First of all because of the orientation of both Paul and the Philippians in chapter 1 towards the gospel in verses 5,7,12,16. What does **Phil. 1:5** say? “**In view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.**” What does **Phil. 1:7** say? “**For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.**” And what does **Phil. 1:12** say? “**Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.**” And finally what does **Phil. 1:16** say, “**The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.** And then what happens when it get to Philippians 1:27 we read this phrase “**Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.**” which introduces to us the theme of the portion of scripture that we are now examining which goes from **Phil. 1:27-2:18**. The gospel is at the heart of his relationship with the Philippians. What does Paul mean when he says, “united in spirit intent on one purpose?” “United in spirit, intent on one purpose” focuses on the need for the entire church to be “gospel oriented” even as we relate to and care for one another. Our relating to one another should never be at the expense of what we are here to do as a church in this world in fact our relating to one another should fuel it and enhance it.

If the Philippian church because of all the motivations listed in **Phil. 2:1** would commit themselves to being united in the way that is described in **Phil. 2:2** and would continue to actually experience it, “How would this impact the apostle Paul?” He says that it would make his “**joy complete.**” If the Philippian church because of all the motivations listed in **Phil. 2:1** would in fact be of the same mind, if they would in fact “maintain the same love”, if they would in fact be “united in spirit and intent on one purpose” it would make his “**joy complete.**”

What does this expression imply? It implies that he is already finding joy in the way the Philippians are living and conducting themselves. He is not saying, “Give me the opportunity to experience some joy through you,” rather he is saying, “make my joy complete.” The Apostle Paul was already experiencing joy because of the way the Philippians were living.

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He has made it clear to them and to us that this is true throughout this epistle. **Phil. 1:3-4** says, **“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, (4) always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all.”**

Let me ask you this question, “Did Paul believe that the Philippian church had the same mind?” Did he view the Philippian church as a church which had set their minds on the things of the Spirit. And the answer would have to be, Yes! In the midst of his prayer for the Philippians in **Phil. 1:11** he says in referring to them, **“having been filled with the righteousness.”** How was it possible for them to have been filled with the fruit of righteousness? They were filled with the fruit of righteousness because they had set their mind on the things of the Spirit.

Let me ask you this question, “Did Paul believe that the Philippians were “maintaining the same love?” Did he view the Philippian church as a church which was seeking to love one another in the same kind way that they have been loved by God? Again I would have to believe the answer would be, yes! In Paul’s same prayer for the Philippians in **Phil. 1:9** he prayed these words on behalf of the Philippians **“that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.”** This communicates what to us? It communicates that their love for one another, agape love, was present and already abounding.

Let me ask you this question, “Did Paul believe that the Philippians were “united in spirit and intent on one purpose”? Did he view the Philippian church as being gospel oriented even in the midst of the abounding love for one another and the answer is, “Absolutely!” Let us read **Phil. 1:3-5** **“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, (5) in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.”**

If this true then what does Paul mean when he tells them to “make my joy complete?” Making his joy complete is a command for the Philippian church to continue to practice church unity as he describes it in Philippians 1:2. What we may be experiencing today may not be what we will experience tomorrow. So let us continue to be diligent if we are doing well to keep on keeping on just as Paul was commanding the Philippians to essence to keep on keeping on in Philippians 2:2 when commands them to make his joy complete.

CONCLUSION

Our primary source of joy is produced in us by the Holy Spirit as we receive and obey God’s word. But there is also a secondary source of joy which we hopefully will also experience. It is the joy that we experience when we see each other with the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit intent on one purpose..... In terms of the joy that the circumstances of this life has to offer there is no joy that can compare to this joy..... **3 John 4.**