

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

The two most recurring themes in Philippians is the secret to true joy and the importance of maintaining the right attitude, which in experience are inseparably linked. The two primary things that rob us of joy are circumstances & people; therefore, our attitude toward circumstances & people will determine our joy or lack of it.

In chapter one circumstances could not rob Paul of joy because of his single mind to live for Christ (v. 21). Paul viewed circumstances not working against him, but working for him to know Christ deeper and make Christ known to others. Paul is not the prisoner of Rome; he is *the prisoner of Jesus Christ* (Eph. 3: 1). The chains he wears are *my bonds in the cause of Christ* (v. 13). He is not facing a civil trial; he is set for *the defense of the gospel* (v. 7). Paul never looked at Christ through his circumstances, but looked at his circumstances through Christ which was the secret to his joy.

In chapter two people could not rob Paul of joy because of his servant attitude to love like Christ (v. 5). Paul viewed people not as the means to get what he wanted, but gifts from God providing the opportunity to learn to love as Christ loved. Therefore, like Christ, Paul's joy was never determined by what he received from others, but by what he gave to others.

The great lesson from chapter two is that the only sufficient basis for unity in the church is each member following the model of Christ's love, *who did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant...and He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death* (vs. 6-8).

Why is love and unity so important in the church family?

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13: 35

...that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

John 17: 23

The advance of the gospel will rise or fall on how we relate to one another. A church united by the LOVE of Christ is the only thing that will convince a lost world about the TRUTH of Christ.

THE MIND OF CHRIST - THE KEY TO CHURCH UNITY (2:1-8)

INTRODUCTION: The Philippian church was facing external opposition, but also struggling with internal disunity which threatened the credibility of their witness and effectiveness to advance the gospel. These struggles provide the basis for Paul's exhortation at the end of chapter one.

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel...standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in not way alarmed by your opponents (v. 27-28a).

Notice the emphasis on all the church members having "one mind." As we move into chapter two, Paul explains what the "one mind" is - it is believers having the same mind toward one another as Christ had toward them.

1. The mind of Christ is SHARING with one another the BLESSINGS of Christ.

If therefore 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, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose (vs. 1-2).

2. The mind of Christ is THINKING about one another with the ATTITUDE of Christ.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself... Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus (vs. 3 & 5).

3. The mind of Christ is LOOKING at one another with the EYES of Christ.

...do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others (v. 4).

4. The mind of Christ is EMBRACING one another with the ARMS of Christ.

...who, although He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men (vs. 6-7).

5. The mind of Christ is to LOVING one another with the HEART of Christ.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (v. 8).