

JOY IN SERVING JESUS

EXPERIENCING
LASTING JOY
THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES

PRECEPT

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Read the rest of verses 5-11)

PROMISE

Paul implores his readers to “make his joy complete” by living a life of love toward one another (verse 2). A similar phrase is used by Jesus in John 15:11–13: *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”* Even though this is Christ’s command to us all believers, there is still lack of unity in a lot of churches today.

THE BASIS AND THE BASICS OF UNITY IN THE CHURCH (V.1-4). In verses 1-4, Paul was encouraging the Philippi to live in unity whatever happens to them or to the church. Why? Paul had a hint that there was a threat of disunity from their messenger Epaphroditus. It’s not a full grown problem, unlike the church in Corinth that is divided because of celebrities: Paul, Apollos, Peter. True unity can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. Disunity is caused by a spirit (personal pride) other than the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 13:10 reminds us, *“Where there is strife, there is pride.”* God also calls us to one faith. One Saviour and Lord means one passion and goal, and disunity is caused by some other passion or goal.

Not all ambitions are bad, Paul himself is very ambitious, but selfish ambitions are. Selfish ambitions focuses on what we want instead of what God wants, doing things our way instead of God’s ways, what we can get instead of what we can give, and “me” mentality instead of kingdom mentality. Selfishness is the root of all sins; Satan placed himself above God, Adam placed his will above God’s will, and us putting our place above God is selfishness. Pride means vain glory, an excessive or exaggerated ideas of his/her own importance. Being humble takes viewing others as more important than ourselves, spending time with others instead of selfishly spending our time, and praying for others and emptying ourselves.

THE EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW TO HAVE UNITY IN THE CHURCH (V.5-8).

Verse 5 urges us to have the same attitude and mindset as that of Christ Jesus. The Greek text could literally be rendered, “Keep thinking this [attitude] among you, which [attitude] was also in Christ Jesus.” We cannot duplicate the precise ministry of Jesus, but we can display the same attitude. Christ emptied Himself, not emptying Himself of deity, but emptying Himself of the privileges in Heaven. Jesus was fully human and fully God. He was humbly and willingly empty: from God and then a bond-servant, even experienced death on a cross. That is the example we are supposed to follow in order to achieve unity in the church. Following and growing like Jesus will promote unity and diversity in the local church.

THE BLESSING OF ENCOURAGING UNITY IN THE CHURCH (V.9-11).

The Father acknowledged Jesus, wherein He was justified, sanctified, and glorified. Verses 9-11 said, *“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

PRACTICE

1. Christlikeness. What would happen in our relationships if we lived out Philippians 2:1-11? How can we go from being a self-focused person to being an others-focused person?

2. Selflessness. How can someone “not look to their own interests, but rather to the interests of others”? What does that look like?

PRAYER

I. Joy

- May God help us to find delight in His presence and to share joy with others.

II. Love

- May we love others as God have loved us. May His love shine through us in all we do.

III. Hope

- In times of uncertainty and struggle, let us turn to God for hope and trust His plan.

IV. Faith

- Pray that God may strengthen our faith. Help us to seek His guidance in all we do.

V. Peace

- Pray for God’s peace to fill our hearts, our homes, and our world.

VI. Courage

- Pray that God may grant us the courage to face the challenges before us.

VII. Healing

- Pray for God to bring comfort to those who are suffering and sick.