

12. The Book of Philippians 1:27-2:2

Joy in Unity-Part 5

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
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We have begun a study in Paul's letter to the Philippians—looking at its theme of 'joy' topically.

So far we've looked at:

- I. Joy in Fellowship—1:3-6
- II. Joy in Proclaiming the Gospel—1:12-18
- III. Joy of Faith—1:25
- IV. Joy in Unity—1:27-2:2

Philippians 1:27–2:2 (NKJV)

²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me. ¹ Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

Seven times in these verses Paul using various phrases expresses his hope that the Philippian Christians will walk in unity with one another.

As we have said numerous times during our study on unity—it is essential, not only for joy but also for victory against the devil in his attacks on the people of God. The bottom line is that we are stronger together than we are alone (Hebrews 10:24-25).

One of the greatest passages on Christian unity in the New Testament comes out of Ephesians 4. In Ephesians 4 verses 3 and 13 Paul talks about the basis for our unity with one another as believers in Christ.

In verse 3 he talks about "the unity of the Spirit" and then in verse 13 he mentions "the unity of the faith."

We are currently looking at the first one:

A. Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:1-3 (NKJV)

¹I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ²with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul speaks of the importance of *maintaining* our unity as Christians—but then in verses 4-6, he goes on to give us the 7 spiritual realities that make up our unity and bind us together as one in Christ:

So far, we've looked at the first 6 spiritual realities that unite all true Christians together—

Ephesians 4:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

That then, brings us this morning to number 7 on the list:

7. One God and Father

Ephesians 4:6 (NKJV)

⁶one God and Father...

Understand, that when Paul says that there is only **one God** (the Father)—he is not denying the Trinity.

In fact, in verses 4-6 all three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned—albeit in the reverse order to that usually given in Scripture: **one Spirit** (verse 4); **one Lord** (verse 5—the Lord Jesus); **one God and Father** (verse 6).

The Bible teaches that though there is only one true God—He is revealed or manifested in three separate and distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each is independent from the other—but never do they act independently of one another.

In the very first verse of the Bible, we see the Triune God (Trinity) presented, “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*” (Genesis 1:1)

The word '**God**' in verse 1 is the Hebrew word *Elohim* which is plural in the Hebrew and therefore should be coupled with a plural verb and a plural pronoun whenever it appears in a sentence to make the sentence grammatically correct.

However, whenever the word *Elohim* appears in the Old Testament and relates to the LORD God (the word 'elohim' is used of false gods in Exodus 32:1; and of Israel's judges in Psalms 82:6) the verbs and pronouns are always in the singular which makes the sentence grammatically incorrect but communicates the tri-unity of God (one God in some kind of plurality).

God reinforced the truth of the Trinity in the Shema: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one* (echad)!” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

The *Shema* is the great Jewish statement of faith that was and still is recited twice daily by every orthodox Jew—once in the morning prayer and once in the evening prayer.

In this verse we are told that God is one—however, when we examine the Hebrew word “*echad*” translated here as “*one*” we discover an interesting meaning.

The Hebrew word “*echad*” comes from a Hebrew root which means, “*to unify*” or “*collect together*.”

The word literally means a “*united one*” or “*compound unity*” (the same word of the *one* cluster of grapes brought back by the spies sent into the Promised Land—one cluster consisting of many individual grapes).

The word is used in Genesis 2:24 of marriage—“*the two shall become one [echad] flesh.*”

This is in contrast to the Hebrew word ‘*yachid*’ which means ‘*one*’ in the sense of ‘*a solitary oneness—single, sole*’—a word that is never used in the O.T. in reference to God.

The LORD our God is **one** LORD (*echad*—a united one, a compound unity—a Trinity)!

This connects the Christian faith with Judaism.

The God of the Old Testament that the Jewish people have worshipped since the days of Abraham is the same God of the New Testament that we Christians worship. Out of Judaism came Christianity—Judaism is the root and Christianity is the fruit—which is why we refer to our faith as Judeo-Christianity.

Ephesians 4:6 (NKJV)

⁶one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

The fourfold use of “**all**” refers not to ‘all’ *people*—but to all *believers* in Jesus Christ.”

a. One God and Father of all

God is not a Father to all mankind (the Bible never teaches the “*Universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man*”).

He is the Creator of all mankind but doesn’t become our Father until we are born into the family of God by accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord (John 3).

b. God is above all

This means that God is *transcendent*—He is separate from His creation—He is above His creation—He is not dependent upon His creation.

J. Vernon McGee—

“He doesn’t depend upon oxygen to breathe. He doesn’t have to pick food from the trees He created to survive—He is transcendent.”

So, God is completely independent and self-sufficient—He is **above all** that He has created.

c. God is through all

In saying this, Paul wants us to know that even though God is separate from His creation—He remains intimately connected to His creation. Or as the theologians put it—He is not only *transcendent*—He is also imminent.

That means He is in this universe in which you and I live—and is intimately involved in it. In other words, He is not a ‘distant Deity’ who created all things and then withdrew to a neutral corner somewhere outside of His creation where He observes but remains detached and uninvolved in the affairs of mankind (Deism).

He is very much active in His creation—He is moving it along according to His divine plan and purpose.

One author put it this way—

“The terms transcendence and immanence are not found in most versions of the Bible—but they are common in the theological literature to designate two kinds of relationships between God and human beings. In general, to say that God is transcendent is to say that he is exalted above all and beyond us all. To say that God is immanent is to say that he is present in time and space, that he is near us. There is no biblical term that captures all of what theologians want to say about God’s transcendence—but the idea of immanence is helpfully summarized in the term Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8; Matthew 1:23).”

d. God is in you all

Now at first glance it sounds like Paul is teaching *pantheism* (that God is a force that flows thru all). But here Paul doesn’t say that God is ‘*in all*’—he says that God is in ‘*you all*’ meaning He is in His Church—that He lives inside of all believers in Christ thru the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This means that the main instrument God uses to bring about His purposes on earth—is His Church which His presence fills. In other words, He is “**in you all**” as believers in Jesus Christ.

Now, while His presence fills all true believers in Jesus—all people (believers and unbelievers alike) live ‘*in Him*’ in the sense that—He is omnipresent which means His presence fills the universe and there is no place where a person can be separate from Him.

Psalm 139:7–10 (NKJV)

⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.

Paul expressed this thought to the Athenians on Mars Hill—

Acts 17:24-25, 28 (NKJV)

²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things... ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and have our being...

We have been talking about Christian unity for the last few weeks and how important it is to the overall health and effectiveness of Jesus’ Church on the earth in fulfilling the Great Commission. Of course, the devil understands this which is why he tries so hard to sow division into the local church (if he can divide us, he can defeat us)—and one of the main ways he does this is **through false doctrine**.

As you read the New Testament, this is a recurring theme that we are commanded to be on guard against.

It is an issue that Paul himself was very concerned about and mentioned constantly in his epistles—that Christians not break the unity of the Spirit by agreeing with and embracing false doctrine—

Romans 16:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Today in the Church the motto seems to be “*unity at any price*”—as if unity is the most important thing the Church should be concerned about—it isn’t TRUTH is!

In fact, many are saying—“*Doctrine divides, so let’s get away from the teaching of the Bible with all that doctrine—and let’s come together as a global community to work together in dealing with climate change, ending world hunger, disease, and in promoting equity and social justice...*”

Listen, sometimes division is a good thing—as Jesus said about His own ministry: “*Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword...*” (Matthew 10:34)

I agree that doctrine divides—because the Word of God is the “*Sword of the Spirit*”, and it is the purpose of a sword to cut or ‘*divide*’. The Word of God will divide the true from the false, the fleshly from the spiritual (Heb.4:12)—and the genuine from the counterfeit.

No wonder the devil loves it when churches go ‘woke’ and teach woke ideologies like CRT and equity. Or when they simply stop teaching sound doctrine and only feed their people nothing but ‘*positive feel good*’ messages that never offend and are tolerant and inclusive of everyone and any teaching—other than God’s Word!

The one foundational truth that will ground us and unify us as believers in Christ is—the faith!

The subject of unity is Paul’s theme in verses 1-16 of Ephesians chapter 4.

In Ephesians 4:3 he talks about the ‘*unity of the Spirit*’—and here in Ephesians 4:13 he makes reference to the ‘*unity of the faith*’ (also in Ephesians 4:5).

B. Unity of the Faith

As we said last time, there is a set of truths upon which the Church of Jesus Christ is built—a body of truth we call the New Testament. This body of truth is also referred to as “**the faith**”—the one and only faith that God has committed to His Church for safe keeping and distribution to a lost and dying world.

This truth is the foundation upon which our faith is built (Jesus being the Chief cornerstone)—which is why Satan attacks it so vehemently: “*If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?*” (Psalm 11:3)

The devil has been chipping away at that foundation for years and has been successful in his attack on biblical truth.

I have seen several surveys taken recently among professing Christians and the results are very disturbing.

- *Half of professing born-again believers say that sharing their Christian faith is not important to them—the same percentage only reads or studies the Bible once a week if that.*
- *Less than half of professing Christians say that human life is sacred (which means abortion is acceptable)*
- *Only 63% of professing born-again Christians say God is the basis of all truth.*

- *Less than half of professing Christians believe that Jesus was sinless, that the Bible is the Word of God, that Jesus was virgin born or that He lived a sinless life.*

I have to lay a substantial part of the blame for this biblical illiteracy on pastors who call themselves Christians—as they are supposed to feed God’s sheep on His Word.

Surveys taken among clergy found that a shockingly large percentage reject biblical teaching on some of the most basic Christian beliefs.

- *Just 37% of Christian pastors have a biblical worldview.*
- *Another 39% of Evangelical pastors surveyed said there is no absolute moral truth and that “each individual must determine their own truth.”*
- *At least a third of senior pastors in the United States believe one can earn a place in Heaven by simply being a good person, according to a nationwide survey.*
- *One-third or more of senior pastors surveyed also believe the Holy Spirit is not a person but rather “a symbol of God’s power.”*
- *Others said that moral truth is subjective; sexual relations between two unmarried people who love each other is “morally acceptable.”*
- *At least a third of those surveyed also said they believe “socialism is preferable to capitalism and that allowing property ownership facilitates economic injustice,” which researchers say could point to the “increase of cultural and political influence into the church.”*

Let me read you an article based on what happened at a Lutheran church in Minnesota last Sunday if you doubt that the church in America for the most part has lost its way:

“A female Lutheran pastor in Minnesota has gone viral for leading her congregation in a “sparkle creed” prayer in honor of LGBT pride month in which she described God as “nonbinary” and Christ Jesus as having “two dads.”
Anna Helgen, co-pastor of Edina Community Lutheran Church (ECLC) in Edina, a suburb of Minneapolis, delivered the prayer during a Sunday service on June 25, when she called on members of the church to stand and recite a statement of faith known on social media as the “sparkle creed.”
“I believe in the nonbinary God, whose pronouns are plural,” Helgen said.
“I believe in Jesus Christ, their child, who wore a fabulous tunic, and had two dads and saw everyone as a sibling child of God.”
“I believe in the rainbow spirit who shatters our image of one white light and refracts it into a rainbow of gorgeous diversity.”
“I believe in the church of everyday saints, as numerous, creative and resilient as patches on the AIDS quilt, whose feet are grounded in mud and whose eyes gaze at the stars in wonder.”
“I believe in the calling to each of us that love is love is love (so gay love is totally normal), so beloved let us love.”
“I believe, glorious God, help my unbelief, Amen.”

2 Timothy 4:1–4 (NKJV)

¹ I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Of course, every Christian apostate will tell you that evangelical Christians are the haters because we oppose abortion, hormone blockers for gender reassignment and the transgender movement with its promotion of 'gender affirming surgeries' for children which is nothing more than the mutilation of children by hospitals and doctors who make big money on these surgeries.

Those who support these things believe they are the ones who love and care about people—that they are the true Christians approved by God. Yet the Apostle John and the other writers of the New Testament disagree—

2 John 6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. ⁷ For many deceivers have gone out into the world...

1 John 2:3–6 (NKJV)

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Let me end with a portion of an article that came out a few months ago written by Christian author David Lightsey:

"As of July 1, 2021, there were an estimated 249 million adults aged 20 or older living in the U.S. Of this population group, 63% are self-identified Christians.

So, roughly 156 million Americans proclaim to be Christians. But, if this is true, then why is everything so upside down culturally? Fairly simple answer: Fake Christianity and the lack of recognition of an objective authoritative source of truth vs. a subjective version, illustrating that much of this "Christian" base is really nothing more than counterfeit, easily influenced by the culture and considerably different than the authentic version.

Then he quotes a well-known pastor who said:

"Authentic Christianity understands that the Scriptures (the Bible) is objective. It is absolute divine truth ('the faith'). No person has ever had, in himself, any idea or any experience or any thought or any intuition that determines the truth. The truth is already determined by God and revealed in Scripture. No human individually, no humans collectively, are sources for establishing the truth. Neither is any angelic being a source for establishing the truth. That's why Paul says, if anyone – anyone – even an angel from Heaven teaches you anything other than this truth, let him be cursed."

The liberal culture (the 'woke' church) has manufactured their own false reality based upon what they perceive to be true, which could not be more warped and antithetical to what is truth. However, truth is not subjective, nor personal; it's clearly objective and always defined by Scripture. So, due in part to a growing number of compromising 'Christians' and pastors—truth has become this fluctuating set of culturally driven standards, which are never supposed to be offensive. Scripture is God's truth, whether it affects anybody or nobody. It is God's truth whether you agree with it or disagree with it, like it or don't like it." The truth is offensive, and there will always be a fixed animosity between the culture and authentic Christianity. The divide or chasm between the two could not be any wider than it currently is."

In these last days just before Jesus returns for His Church—it will be ‘The Faith’ thru the power of the Holy Spirit that will bind God’s people together in unity.

The faith is found in God’s Word—and in particular the New Testament.

Read the Word, study the Word and share the Word—the time has never been more critical nor the warfare more intense.

Proverbs 14:12 (NLT)

¹² There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

Jeremiah 6:16 (NLT)

¹⁶ This is what the Lord says: “Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls. But they reply, ‘No, that’s not the road we want!’”

Isaiah 8:20 (NKJV)

...If they do not speak according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).