

## A Mindset that Makes All the Difference

Today we are in **Part 2** of our **4 Part Series** through the Book of **Philippians**. Philippians, which is actually found in the NT, is a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church that met in the Greek city of Philippi while he was under house arrest in Rome. The question is, “Why was Paul under house arrest to begin with?” He was accused by Jewish leaders of encouraging Jews to violate the Law of Moses and others who were not Jews to violate purification rituals for the Temple. In actuality all he was really guilty of was preaching about how salvation was available for all people through Jesus Christ. As we said last week, what makes Paul’s letter to the Philippian church so beautiful was that in spite of his imprisonment by Roman officials and his persecution by the Jewish religious leaders, the dominant tone of the letter was one of **JOY** motivated by an attitude that **No matter what we face in life, we shouldn’t let our circumstances keep us from the pursuit of Christlikeness.**

Last week, as we examined **Chapter 1**, we highlighted two important perspectives we need to have if we are going to experience JOY in spite of trying circumstances. We talked about the importance of always being THANKFUL for what God so graciously gives us and of always understanding that because of what we have in Christ Jesus we cannot lose because through Christ we are always WIN. And that brings us to **Chapter 2** where Paul is going to build on what he said in the first chapter by showing us the kind of **MINDSET we need to develop if we want joyous living to really take root in our lives.** So as we prepare to encounter this MINDSET let’s ask God to open our hearts to a countercultural way of thinking about life that flies in the face of how we all tend to react naturally to the world around us. **(PRAY)**

We can talk all we want about how we ought to live. We can give you a list of perspectives that lead to a joyous life. But at the end of the day, whether or not it actually comes to fruition in our lives all hinges on our ATTITUDE.

*“Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.” - Winston Churchill*

*“Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude.” - Zig Ziglar*

I think both of these statements are absolutely true especially when we talk about joyous living. Attitude does make all the difference and will 100% determine how successful we are in its pursuit. But let’s consider for a moment what it is that truly impacts our attitude.

We can describe ATTITUDE as the way we think and respond about something. It’s our general outlook on life. Many people believe that attitude is formed by the words or actions of others. And for some of us, probably more often than not, this is true. Some believe that our attitudes are formed by our experiences. For example, GOOD experiences lead to positive attitudes. While BAD experiences lead to negative attitudes. But in all reality – attitudes are actually impacted by our mindset and our mindset is influenced through observation, interaction, and experience with what we believe to be true.

If ATTITUDE is greatly impacted by our MINDSET then **what is impacting our belief and the way you and I think? What is informing you and I on how we think about ourselves? What is informing you and I on how we think about others?** If we are going to maintain JOY regardless of our circumstances as Paul calls us to in Chapter 1, what needs to inform our MINDSET and thus impact our ATTITUDES accordingly? Well, fortunately for us Paul gives us the answer here in Chapter 2.

**Philippians 2:1(NIV) 1** Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing (experience of unity and belonging) in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

In other words, have you received any benefit from being associated with the body of Christ? Have you been encouraged by the testimony of others who have found victory in spite of difficult situations? Have you been comforted by the selflessness of others in your time of need and inspired to do the same for others? Have you been able to experience a common ground and a place of belonging with other believers as with a closely knit family? Well this doesn't happen by accident! And we cannot establish this kind of environment in the church unless we have the right ATTITUDE flowing from the right kind of MINDSET. We do not have the capacity within ourselves and we cannot make it happen in our own strength. So notice what Paul encourages the Philippian church to do if they have found any benefit in being associated with the Body of Christ.

**Philippians 2:2-4 (NIV)2** then make my joy complete (Notice Paul's joy is not about him and what he receives or doesn't receive! His joy is found in what they experience and receive) **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. Notice it says "interests", not "needs". How would our lives be different if we all looked after others and their interests, rather than only ours?

Here Paul defines THREE approaches we need to take regarding our ATTITUDES. BTW, if we are to be UNIFIED about anything let's be unified in regard to the development of our ATTITUDES toward one another. Notice what he says in the first part of vs. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

1) We must **ELIMINATE** any and all attitudes that are selfishly motivated. We need to evaluate our heart attitudes. What is the primary motivation for the actions you take in life? Is it about YOU or is it about OTHERS? Paul says get rid of anything that competes for your concern regarding others. Notice the second part of vs. 3: in humility value others above yourselves,

2) We must **CULTIVATE** an attitude that seeks to value others above ourselves. Do you ever consider how your actions may affect others before you move? Whether you do or not really

depends on whether you value the other person above yourself. Paul encourages us to be proactive in seeking to cultivate attitudes that are going to elevate others which only happens when we humbly yield our selfish wants and desires in order to consider others. Then Paul says this in vs. 4: not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

### 3) We must PRACTICE looking out for the interests of others instead of our own.

Now, let's be honest, these three approaches are hard to embrace. They are the opposite of what comes naturally. It is also counter to our culture and what the world promotes. Therefore, we must allow God to change our mindset by allowing how Jesus lived to impact what we believe to be true and right. So notice what Paul says about our relationships.

**Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)** 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: If we don't look to and follow Jesus's example, we won't fully be faithful to God and in unity with Him and His people. 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Humility is more about acknowledging the value of others than it is about belittling yourself Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There are several observations we need to note here:

The first observation is JESUS is our example for how to live LIFE. As such we have access to the same Spirit and this is what the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives. Are we letting the Holy Spirit teach us and empower us to live this way? We are only in a position to have our mindset changed if we have encountered the person of Jesus and invited Him into our lives

Secondly, Jesus used His position to better the lives of others not to better Himself. He didn't have to elevate Himself because of the standing he already had with the Father and the fact that He trusted Himself into the care of His Father. We should have the same mindset He had. How would the world be different if you used your position in life (social, educational, financial, job position, or influence) to improve the lives of others? Are you willing to take a loss so others can win? Remember in Christ we win no matter what. Notice the attitude of Jesus is to always move "downward" and "in". To make Himself accessible to everyone and to better their lives by drawing them close to Himself and the Father. Our attitude is the opposite, we want to move "upward" and "out". We want to be above others and better our position to be over others. The only way we can have the attitude Jesus had is to understand the position and standing we have with the Father through His salvation.

Thirdly, **Jesus let His Father do all the promotion**. Jesus was not concerned with trying to elevate Himself because He knew that if He was faithful the Father would take care of all that. How would our lives be different if we stopped trying to promote ourselves and concentrated all of our mind and energy on just trying to be faithful to what God has asked us to do? Notice Paul's encouragement.

**Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV) 12** Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence Paul doesn't command them to obey, because mature believers choose obedience as the default because they know it is the better way to live—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Work OUT your salvation. Not work FOR your salvation. God has given you salvation (just like your body), you have to work it out to stay healthy as you live your life. This requires that we recognize its value and importance. Recognize its impact on others in your life. In other words, bring salvation into action in your life.

God calls us to faithfully obey Him as He works in us to do what He's called us to do. There's cooperation. It's God who gives us the ability to glorify Him, yet we have to choose to faithfully obey each step of the way and trust Him.

**Philippians 2:14-18 (NIV) 14** Do everything without grumbling or arguing. **15** so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky **16** as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. **17** But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. **18** So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Grumbling and complaining is poison to the heart of a believer! There is a purifying of our heart that takes place when we learn to give praise and thanksgiving in all things. I never complain more than when I am filled with selfishness! Learning to live without grumbling and complaining helps us to put to death the flesh. One thing is certain: **it is impossible to praise and experience joy while grumbling and complaining!**

Remember what happened to Israel in the wilderness (Exodus from Egypt). God had set them free and wanted them to inherit the Promised Land but because of their grumbling and complaining which led to disobedience they never got to experience all that God had for them. **Do you want to be the generation God uses, or the generation God has to let die off?**

As we are following God and set apart from the world, we are to hold to the GOSPEL firmly (The WORD of LIFE). To keep our eyes, mind, and will on it. To learn from it and let it saturate our lives. When we do our lives shine brightly for God and we actually live out Romans 12:1-2

**Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper

worship. **2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Paul closes Chapter 2 with two examples of what it means to be a living sacrifice:

**Philippians 2:19-24(NIV)****19** I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. **20** I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. **21** For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. **22** But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. **23** I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. **24** And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

Could Paul say about you what he said about Timothy? Notice this is true of those who are of Jesus.

**Philippians 2:25-30 (NIV)****25** But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. **26** For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. **27** Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. **28** Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. **29** So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, **30** because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Epaphroditus was also someone who was more concerned about others than he was himself. Vs. 27 says he was distressed (heavily worried about the Philippians and their worry for him than he was for his own situation). He also exhausted himself even though he was ill and close to death out of his deep concern to help Paul.

### **Invitation:**

What are you dying for? What are you going to great lengths to sacrifice for? Are you concerned for YOU or are you leveraging your life for the sake of others and their interests?

### **What attitudes do you need to eliminate that are selfishly motivated?**

Evaluate your heart attitudes. What is the primary motivation for the actions you take in life? Is it about YOU or is it about OTHERS?

### **What attitudes do you need to cultivate in order to value others above yourself?**

Do you ever consider how your actions may affect others before you move?

**May we pray for the mindset that makes all the difference - the mind of Christ! Let this mind be in YOU:**

**Philippians 2:6-8 (NIV)** **6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; **7** rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. **8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!