

**WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?**  
**Attitude**  
**Philippians 2:1-11**

People are always afraid that I am going to mention them by NAME and talk about their sins from the pulpit at some point. Some people have claimed that I built my entire message around some sin that they had committed during the previous week, but that I just did not call them out by name. I have news for you. I DO THAT! I snoop around all week looking for our members who are getting drunk at the bars or cheating on their spouse so that I can bust them out in a message. IT IS FUN! I love to give enough information so that the person knows exactly whom I am talking about, but not enough to get me into legal trouble (kind of like in the movie *The Help!*). It is one of the joys of the pastorate! Are you nervously wondering if I have been by your house lately? Ok, before you completely freak out, I want you to know that I do not REALLY sneak around looking for our members who are acting like idiots so that I can talk about them from the pulpit. **The truth is, I don't HAVE to SNEAK around looking for them. When we act like FOOLS, it is pretty easy to spot us without using stealth tactics!** "Church Members Gone Wild," also known as **FACEBOOK!** So, what's your problem? Relax; I will not be mentioning you by name today. Maybe.

On the other hand, Paul was not afraid to mention people by name when he wanted to give them a blessing or an admonition. He mentioned people by name in his letters all of the time, because their actions were, *BY THEIR VERY NATURE, PUBLIC*. This was the reason why Paul personally addressed two women who were at Philippi that had greatly helped him in the past in that awesome church, but who were now acting in a manner that was harming the church. Surprisingly to some, Paul did not bust them out for sleeping around on their husbands or shoplifting at Sears. They were "just" having an argument. No big deal, right? We will see.

**Philippians 4:3 NASB**

**2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.**

Can you imagine how they freaked out when the pastor was reading this letter to the church on a Sunday morning? How would you feel? At any rate, Paul made sure that he addressed this disagreement between these two women because they were having a very public fight of some sort. We do not know what it was about, but they were leaders in the church; so my guess is that they were arguing about who was doing ministry in the "right" way. I see this all of the time. What I want to focus on in this message is the TERM that Paul used [**"live in harmony"**] as his instruction for these two women to make things right. It is a term that he uses no less than 10 times in this little letter. The term is the Greek word **"Phroneo."** It is translated in a variety of ways based on the context, but it means to **"mind [the same things]."** It is a RELATIONAL MINDSET that shows up in our spirit. Here is the principle:

**Broken relationships can be healed if we choose to adjust our attitudes.**

Your ATTITUDE is showing, and if it is a bad one, it is a JOY KILLER! It is stinking up your home and your workplace, and it is stinking up the house of worship! But it does not have to be that way! The dictionary defines attitude as: “a settled way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior.” Our attitudes have a way of settling into something less than favorable over time, and it will need to be readjusted! Do you have a right attitude toward your faith family? Is your behavior reflecting love, or something less? **I am not talking about the person that you love the MOST at CHC; I am talking about the one that you love the LEAST!** In this passage, we are given the biblical COMMAND to take hold of our mind and force it to FOCUS on the RIGHT thing in the right way so that we can fulfill our divine calling. **We must allow Christ to RESET our MINDSET by way of an ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT!** Paul told Euodia and Syntyche to get on the SAME PAGE relationally by adjusting their attitude toward one another. He only mentioned these two women by name, but make no mistake, the entire church needed to hear him address their disagreement because the church itself was beginning to fall prey to a spirit of disharmony and disagreement that could potentially wreck their fellowship and their impact in ministry. You see, these people were NO DIFFERENT than us.

Yes, even mature Christians have arguments. We are human, and we WILL find ourselves disagreeing with one another at some point. However, these disagreements do not have to end in broken relationships! Sadly, they often do because of our failure to apply this truth that Paul gives us in Philippians (and Romans, and Galatians, and Corinthians, and Ephesians, and . . . ). I want us to see his directions for PROTECTING our ATTITUDE in our passage today. I will begin by reading Paul's bottom-line relational plea back in chapter 2: **Philippians 2:2 NIV**

**2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.**

Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians to commend them for their faith and their generosity, but he also wanted to address the subtle sin that was quietly becoming a cancer in their fellowship. **Bad attitudes lead to DISUNITY.** Whenever people join CHC, I make sure to tell them that the first thing that the enemy will try to destroy in the church is our UNITY. This is why every new member agrees to GUARD THE UNITY of CHC by refusing to gossip, committing to love the other members, and by following the vision of the church without complaining or undermining her leaders. **They have to watch the drift of their attitude!** This is VITAL to our continued success as a church. It is also the SOURCE of our JOY in ministry. When it is lacking, it is devastating to our fellowship and to our witness to the lost world. Paul knew that this was true for the church at Philippi as well, so he did his best to LEVERAGE his influence on the members at Philippi for the benefit of THEIR UNITY. He was not looking for luxuries and benefits for himself. His pastoral heart was aching over

their potential disunity, so he wrote very powerful words to help them fight this cancer. I want his words to personally challenge us here today. **These principles can help any friendship or family relationship if they are properly applied, but I want to keep them in the same context that Paul used in his letter: Christian attitudes that support Christian fellowship.**

Are YOU having any relationship problems with other believers in the church right now? Are you holding grudges or harboring resentment against someone else at CHC (or maybe at the church you LEFT to come here!)? Have you developed an attitude about some of your brothers and sisters in the faith? If so, then this message is for you. If you have a great attitude and you are NOT having any relationship troubles with other believers right now; congratulations! This message is STILL for you though, because relationships WILL BE a problem for you at some point unless you continually apply what I am about to share. I also want to point out that this message works best if ALL OF US learn and apply what Paul tells us, but it is still effective even in only SOME of us get it. However, I am aiming for ALL of us as my target today. So stand still, please!

Remember, last week we ended the message by reading Paul's admonition for the believers to "stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the Gospel." This was a plea for them to function in perfect unity. All of chapter 2 is focused on teaching them just HOW to do this. He begins by asking them a series of rhetorical questions. The "ifs" in each of these questions are not really an indication that they might not be true. They are "no brainer" questions that are pointing them to the FUNCTIONAL BASIS of their unity. **Philippians 2:1 NKJV**

**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,**

**Our identity IN CHRIST is our basis for unity.** We are ONE in him. We come from a million different backgrounds and we struggle with a million different besetting sins and personality quirks, but we are ONE FAMILY in Christ. **He has performed that miracle without our help, but now we must cooperate with his Spirit to experience many of the blessings that come with our newfound faith and family.** We are RICH! First, Paul alludes to our "consolation in Christ." This is the word "paraklesis," and it means that Christ "comes near when we call" to "comfort" us. You have the very PRESENCE of Christ to comfort you when you are distressed. You do not have to give in to your base addictions and behaviors when things do not go your way. Find your consolation and comfort in the nearness of Christ. Next, Paul speaks of the "comfort of love." The words here are not so much those that make you FEEL better, but love expressed as "tender, persuasive words of encouragement." It is a reference to the reality that the Christ who loves us and lives within us is able to give us direction and encouragement with a whisper. Have you tasted this? Paul then asks if there is any true "fellowship of the Spirit." The word fellowship is the Greek word "Koinonia" that we looked at last week. In this

context, Paul is using it to speak of our **intimate participation** with Christ and his body by the power of the Holy Spirit. **The sweetness and strength of our mutual participation in the Gospel is possible only because of the work of the Spirit of God. We cannot and will not accomplish this in our own power.** Finally, Paul affirms that in Christ, we are supported by God's **"affection and compassion."** Literally, the words are **"bowels of mercy."** The Greeks and the Hebrews did not speak of the HEART as the center of the passions and emotions, but of the bowels. Isn't that romantic? "I love you with all of my spleen! My colon aches for you!" I can't wait to see the Hallmark cards that will be written about this! Seriously, Paul is saying that we have a wealth of tender affection and mercy that we can show to one another even when we mess up and fail one another because of God's mercies. **Based on these four realities, we will be able to FUNCTION in one accord ("be fellow-souled!") and FULFILL our calling as messengers of the Good News. That is the truth about the resources that we possess. Now comes the hard application.** I want to read the next verse in the Amplified Version. This is a very unique translation (Paraphrase) that may help you to better understand the practical meaning of Paul's words in this letter. **Philippians 2:3 AMP**

**3 Do nothing from factional motives [through contentiousness, strife, selfishness, or for unworthy ends] or prompted by conceit and empty arrogance. Instead, in the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself [thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves].**

You need to read this version of the Bible this week so that you can soak up these words for yourself all week long. **Now, it is time for us to examine our MOTIVES.** Are you ready for this? **First, we are to do NOTHING that is MOTIVATED by SELFISHNESS.** This is a whole message in itself. So much of what I do is motivated by selfishness. I am a selfish man, and I do not often even see my own selfishness. The word **"selfishness"** is literally defined as **"electioneering or intriguing for office."** It is a political term that refers to those who would use "low, divisive means" to get themselves into office. Think: Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton. Now, you may not be running for some political office, but I would bet that some of you are struggling to resist the temptation to use unethical or devious means to get the promotion that you are dying to win at the office or even in the ministry. In the church, people use division and contention to get their way all the time. **My friend Joe Kelley has said on more than one occasion that people do not really want ANSWERS; they want THEIR WAY!** And they will do what they have to in order to get that way. If your goal at the church is to get people to see things your way and to put you at the front of the pack, then you are GUILTY of doing the very thing that Paul is telling us NOT to do. I know some people who could care less what they are doing to the church's reputation and spirit, so long as they are being allowed to "run things" in their particular ministry area. What a travesty! Yet, it happens all of the time.

Are you prompted by conceit and empty arrogance in your home or at this church? Most arrogant people would deny it because they are totally oblivious to the stench of their own pride. If you don't know if this is a problem for you, then let me ask you to measure yourself in how you fulfill what Paul says next: **"With humility of mind, let each regard OTHERS as better than and superior to himself."** Are you always thinking and talking about your own skills and abilities when the gifts of others become apparent? Do you only praise those who praise you? Are you cynical about the "true" spiritual maturity of those who stand on the stage to lead the singing from week to week because they are on the stage and you are not? Do you resent the talents of those who are better at teaching than you are? Are you CRITICAL of those who are better artists or craftsmen than you? Do you know why? P.R.I.D.E. **You have a pride problem if you cannot celebrate the gifts of those who excel beyond what you are capable of in a particular area. Paul says that the only practical remedy for this flaw is to put others before you. Celebrate their victories and skills. Philippians 2:4 AMP**

**4 Let each of you esteem *and* look upon *and* be concerned for not [merely] his own interests, but also each for the interests of others.**

Paul is challenging us to exercise our minds in a NEW way for the sake of our Christian fellowship. **When you are around other believers, I want you to FIND OUT what THEY are interested in or in need of, and seek to focus on ways to encourage that interest or meet that need. Instead of focusing on how immature you think they are, find out where they are growing in their faith and pray for even more success for them in this area.** We are all great at knowing what interests us, and we LOVE telling others about those interests. **But it is time for us to take the focus off of ME and put it on THEE.** Are you willing? This will serve to help you adjust your attitude toward your weakest relationships in the family. But it cannot be done with a SHALLOW commitment. You must sincerely look out for the interests of the others in your church family instead of groaning and complaining about the way that they have not done the same for you. You go first!

I want to end this message today by setting up the message for next week. I think that we all would admit that we probably NEED an attitude adjustment from time to time in the church. If we do not get one, then we will be tempted to CHURCH HOP in order to avoid those who have failed us in some way. But the only way to properly adjust our attitude is to line it up to something OTHER than self. Your attitude needs the proper ALIGNMENT. So does mine. Now, you are not the standard. Neither am I. Thankfully, we know who serves as our perfect Standard of Conduct. Christ Jesus. This is why Paul says these next words: **Philippians 2:5 NLT**

**5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.**

You don't have to align yourself to MY way of thinking. And I do not have to align myself to YOUR way of thinking. We BOTH have to align ourselves to CHRIST'S way

of thinking. The KJV translation simply says, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." **LET**. This will not come naturally. You must **CHOOSE** it. You must **LEARN** it. You must **CULTIVATE** it. You must **TRAIN** yourself to think like Christ when you encounter difficult people. Paul spends the next 6 verses reminding us of the astounding way that Christ humbled himself in order to bring us salvation. He is the ultimate example of the heavenly attitude of humility. Jesus himself said, "**Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and LEARN of me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.**" (Matthew 11:28-29)

Have you ever really considered all that Christ gave up in order to bring you salvation? His story is not a fable or a fairy tale. He was the King of Heaven. He was the Creator who spoke all things into existence. He was seated on the throne of heaven surrounded by the worship of angels. He lacked nothing and had everything. He was fully divine in his nature and perfect in all of his ways. Yet, he emptied himself for us. He literally covered his glory in humble humanity, and he hid his awesome glory and power from us by coming to earth as a frail baby that grew up in poverty in a humble carpenter's home. At some point, his father passed away and he found himself in a single-parent home with several siblings. The God-Man learned obedience through suffering and poverty. Yet, he was without any sin. In his final act of humility, he died the lowest, cruelest death possible for man: Death on a cross. Romans would not crucify Roman citizens on a cross. It was too demeaning. Christ did it for us. Because of this, God gave him **THE NAME** that was above every name. At **THE NAME** of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is **LORD**.

We are commanded to follow his example and trace his steps. This will require something of you that will seem terrifying and absolutely un-American!

**The key to Christ's attitude was his faith-driven decision to surrender his rights.**

You heard me right. In this day when everyone is demanding their rights, Christ taught us to surrender our rights. Lay them down before God and trust him to be your protector and provider. When you begin to demand your rights you will begin to destroy your attitude. I want you to chew on this principle all this week, and we will unpack it in detail in our message next week. For today, my question for you is a simple one:

**In what way have you adjusted YOUR attitude and surrendered your rights for the sake of your Christian brothers and sisters, and how does that line up with the example that Christ set for you?**

Let's pray.