



## Sermon Text: Philippians 2:1-11

Sermon Date: March 5, 2017

The gospel-shaped life is not glamorous; it is gruesome—daily denying ourselves, picking up our crosses, and dying for the good of others. We encounter that reality as we see Paul calling the church of Philippi to gospel-shaped unity. This past Sunday, we walked through our text in four stages.

### THE BASIS FOR UNITY (verse 1)

The basis for Paul's appeal for unity is their present enjoyment of the gospel's blessings. He piles up tangible, emotional experiences that are theirs because of Christ's sacrificial love—encouragement, comfort, partnership, affection and sympathy. He motivates them for the Calvary-road of gospel-shaped unity by reminding them of the experiential satisfaction of the gospel.

### THE ESSENCE OF UNITY (verse 2)

In verse two, we see the essence of Paul's command: they are to complete his joy by being united in outlook and affections. This isn't a call for the dissolving of differences or robotic uniformity. Instead, it is different people with different backgrounds and opinions all united by the same experiences of the gospel and having the same purpose in life—living a life worthy of the gospel (1:27).

### THE EXPRESSION OF UNITY (verses 3-4)

In these verses, Paul fleshes out the practical reality of unity by showing us how unity is expressed and maintained. Here we encounter the costliness of unity. It is laying aside our rights and self-centered ambitions and putting others first, counting other's needs more significant than our own, and adopting the humble mindset of Christ. D.A. Carson asks, "What is this if not a principled taking up of one's cross, dying to self-interest for the sake of others." As he poetically captures, unity is striving to play the second fiddle well ("It takes more grace than I can tell to play the second fiddle well"). And what makes this assignment so difficult is that we are called to selflessness as a lifestyle, not an occasional event.

### THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST (verses 5-11)

To illustrate the lifestyle of gospel-shaped unity, Paul points us to the example of Christ. The cross is the supreme standard of our behavior. We examined the drama of Christ's example in three acts.

1. **As God, Jesus emptied himself (verses 5-7).** Although Jesus was God, he didn't cling to his rights, but instead poured himself out in humble service. He became a lowly servant, a nobody, a mortal man. Here we discover that **in the pursuit of unity, we lay aside our rights.**
2. **As man, Jesus humbled himself (8).** But Christ didn't simply become a man. As a man, he humbled himself even further. He was obedient to the Father's will to the point of death, even the most shameful death of crucifixion. This is Christ's example: God... on a cross! Here we learn that **in the pursuit of unity, we are called to die.**
3. **In response, God exalted him (9-11).** Yet, Christ's story doesn't end in degradation, but in vindication and universal exaltation. The Savior whose footsteps we follow is the exalted King before whom every knee will bow and tongue declare his grandeur. **In pursuit of unity, we must remember the exaltation.** We can lay aside our rights, pick up our crosses, and die for the good of each other because we know that for all eternity all our needs will be met. We will not lose and our sacrifices will not go unrewarded—we will reign with Christ!

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?**
2. **The Philippian church was a fairly healthy church; yet, even still, unity was a challenge. Why is it important to remember that unity is hard, even for healthy churches?**
3. **Why is gospel-shaped unity so difficult? How does the example of Christ compel you to lay aside your rights and die (metaphorically, of course!) for the good of one another?**
4. **Paul sandwiches the call for unity with the satisfaction of the gospel (verse 1 & 9-11). How does gospel satisfaction fuel Cross-carrying sacrifice?**