

“The Epistle of Joy (Part 6 – Philippians 2:1-11)”

Paul addresses the topic of disunity in the church in Philippians 2:1-11. He writes, “*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. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”

In 2:1 Paul states that: 1) the fact that we are all in Christ should keep us in unity; 2) the power of Christian love should keep us in unity; 3) the fact that we share in the Holy Spirit should keep Christians in unity; and 4) the existence of human compassion should keep people from disunity. In 2:2 Paul urges them toward: being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and being of one mind. Three causes of disunity are identified in 2:3-4: 1) selfish ambition (advancing oneself instead of Kingdom work); 2) the desire for personal prestige (our desire should be to focus people’s eyes not on ourselves but on God); 3) concentration on self (when we’re concerned first and foremost with our own interests we are bound to collide with others).

In 2:3-5 the Apostle Paul gives four ways to experience unity and overcome disunity; 2:5-11 really expound on the fourth way. So, **one** way to experience unity and overcome disunity is ***do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit*** (2:3). Selfish ambition is self-interest and self-promotion at the expense of others. Vain conceit refers to those who think too highly of themselves. A **second** way to experience unity and overcome disunity is ***in humility consider others better than yourself*** (2:3). Humility has to do with a proper estimation of oneself. A humble person puts other’s needs ahead of their own. When we emphasize “each” and “others” we will take the position that other’s needs and concerns surpass my own. A **third** way to experience unity and overcome disunity is ***don’t just look out for your own interests but also look out for the interests of others*** (2:4). Others should have our attention and concern. We should be affected by other’s situations. A **fourth** way to experience unity and overcome disunity is ***have the same attitude and mind as that of Christ Jesus*** (2:5-11). We can experience unity and overcome disunity by emulating the example of Jesus. As God, Jesus emptied Himself. Christ’s being God was not for Him a matter of selfish ambition or grasping or seizing for His own advantage—rather, He acted on behalf of others. Jesus showed us that equality with God meant not grasping or grabbing for oneself, but giving away. As Man, Jesus humbled Himself. In His human existence He chose to

take the lowest place and express His love for the world in self-sacrifice. God has exalted Jesus as Lord of all! The Lord is Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is God / Yahweh / Jehovah! One day it will be clear to everyone that God exists (there is only One God; He is the True and Living God) and Jesus Christ is Lord. Those who refuse to believe this by faith on this side of eternity will miss out on God's salvation on that awful day of reckoning. **Following Jesus' example of selflessness and putting others first results in unity and cures us of disunity.**

Discussion Guide/Action Steps

1. Kill selfishness, because selfishness is a relationship killer.
2. If you want to be interestinging, be interesteded.
3. If you're ever in a position where you *could* take advantage of someone, just remember—Jesus was in such a position, but He didn't, so neither should you.
4. Make the following declarations of faith and belief:
 - In becoming human Christ did not stop being God
 - Jesus was God living out a truly human life
 - Jesus Christ is Lord
 - Jesus is God-come-to-earth in human flesh
 - All to the glory of God the Father