**Lesson 6: The Joy Produced by Unity**

Text: Philippians 2:1-11

**Introduction**

Tense feelings between believers do not make for joyful situations. Paul received news from Epaphroditus that strife existed in the church. There were two sources of strife that are addressed in Paul’s letter. False teachers troubled the unity of the church by promoting their false doctrine. This will be addressed later in the letter. In this section, Paul began to deal with the disturbance to their unity that was caused by friction between members. “There can be no joy in the life of the Christian who puts himself above others” (Wiersbe). Paul exhorted them to act in humility toward each other by following the example of Christ. If they had their attention on Christ and the gospel (chapter 1) then they should be willing to serve each other (chapter 2). Since we serve better together we ought to take heed to the emphasis of this passage.

1. Paul appealed to the church to dwell together in unity by having each other’s best interest in mind. (v. 1-4)
   1. The goal was unity, not uniformity. “True spiritual unity comes from within; it is a matter of the heart. Uniformity is the result of pressure from without. This is why Paul opened this section appealing to the highest possible spiritual motives.” (Wiersbe)
   2. An understanding of their position in Christ motivates genuine concern for each other. Stop and think about Paul’s line of thought. (2:1)
      1. There is consolation (encouragement) in Christ.
      2. There is comfort produced by Christlike love.
      3. There is fellowship produced by the Spirit.
      4. There is affection and mercy in Christ.
      5. Given all the resources we have in Christ, there is no reason for strife to exist between believers. Love is of God. (1 John 4:7-8)
      6. If their relationship was right with Christ, their relationship with each other would be right as well.
   3. It produces joy in spiritual leaders when believers are in close fellowship. (2:2)
      1. Those in close fellowship have the same mind.
      2. Those in close fellowship have the same love for each other.
   4. When the church is in unity their focus in serving is on others. (2:3)
      1. They were to avoid “strife” (selfish ambition) and vainglory.
      2. “Vainglory” is empty pride or groundless boasting. It is the mentality that pits Christian against Christian or ministry against ministry.
      3. Instead of serving for self-centered reasons they should serve with “lowliness” of mind or a humble attitude.
      4. They should consider others to be more important than themselves.
   5. Instead of being consumed with their own concerns, they were to seek to be a help to each other. (2:4)
2. They would have each other’s best interest in mind if they followed the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. (2:5-11)
   1. They were to think like Jesus thought so that they might live like Jesus lived. (2:5)
   2. Jesus was in a position of supreme authority. (2:6)
      1. This passage teaches that Christ is truly God.
      2. This doctrine is clearly taught in other passages. (John 1:1; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1-3)
      3. He could have used His position to serve Himself.
   3. Instead, He used His position to serve others. (2:7)
      1. He did not hold on to the recognition that is so eagerly sought by men.
      2. He did not pretend to be a servant.
      3. He truly took the role of being a servant.
      4. He identified with those He came to save.
   4. His humble service brought Him to the place of sacrifice. (2:8)
   5. Because He humbled Himself, God has highly exalted Him. (2:9)
      1. His Name is above every name. (2:9)
      2. Every person will bow before Him. (2:10-11) “To bow before Him now means salvation. To bow before Him at the judgment means condemnation” (Wiersbe)
      3. His humble service brought great glory to God the Father.
3. Central Idea: The Philippians could dwell together in unity by following the example of Christ in humble service to each other.
4. Application: Hillcrest Baptist Church dwells together in unity as we follow the example of Christ in humble service to each other.
   1. Selfishness destroys the unity of our church.
   2. A Christlike attitude is one in which you use your position and resources to serve others.
   3. Consider ways in which you could use your position and resources to serve others.
      1. Instead of being stingy with your time, you could use the time given to you to serve others. Consider practical ways you might do so.
      2. Instead of using your income on yourself, you could sacrificially give that others might be blessed and helped.
      3. Instead of waiting for others to perform a task, be the first to serve.
   4. Take time to consider how this approach to life would impact the various areas of your life.

**Conclusion**

Joy is produced when we serve others. Paul wanted to see the church in Philippi functioning together in humble service to each other. This is the only way a church can properly function. You will have others in mind if you follow the example of Jesus. Are you thinking about others the way Jesus does? Does your attitude toward people reflect His attitude? If not, humble yourself before Him and ask Him to give you His love for those around you. You will find true joy in serving Christ by serving others.