



EVERLASTING JOY
The Book of Philippians
Lesson Two

Welcome back to our study of Philippians. (Are you ready for some more joy?) Paul sure is a character, isn't he? I think Satan was out to get Paul. He tried to physically hurt and discourage him over and over again. If he thought that locking him up in prison would do the trick, he was definitely mistaken. In chapter 1, Paul expresses the joy that he has in Christ, despite his chains. Now, in chapter 2, Paul encourages the Philippians to put away a spirit of strife, pursuing unity within themselves. Unselfishness is the key. Paul introduces three tremendous examples that exemplify the spirit of unity: Jesus, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. Chapter 2 is often considered the **key chapter** in this entire book.

I pray that as you study this chapter, your heart would be stirred by the example of Christ. **Memory Verse of the Week:** "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."
Philippians 2:4

This chapter begins with an exhortation to be unselfish. Paul then gives practical advice on how this is accomplished and wraps it up with three examples of selflessness being lived out.

1. Read Philippians 2:1-30. Observe and list any facts you find.

2. Break this chapter into sections, giving each section a title that reflects the main thought.
3. Are there any key or repeated words, phrases, or thoughts? Write them on your Key Word Sheet.
4. How many times are the words “joy” and “rejoicing” used?
5. Are there any commands? Any promises? Any contrasts or comparisons?
6. Let’s begin with Philippians 2:1-4. What would make Paul happy, or fulfill his joy? Why?
7. What seemed to be Paul’s concern?

Paul wanted the Philippians to remember the comforting, consoling power of the Lord Jesus, and put aside any disagreements. He wanted them to be likeminded, or “to mind or think the same thing.” He also wanted them to have unity of mind, heart, and purpose in the Lord.

8. According to Paul in verses 3-4, how do we do this?
9. How do these verses fly in the face of today’s world?

**“If a man is forever concerned first and foremost with his own interests,
he is bound to collide with others.”**

William Barclay

- 10.** In our homes, how can we practically apply these verses?

- 11.** Is it possible to do “good” things with selfish ambition? Give an example.

- 12.** Do you seek the prosperity and promotion of others? Are you in the habit of putting others before yourself?

- 13.** Explain how selfishness breeds disunity.

- 14.** Are you presently involved in any conflict? Search your heart for any selfishness and get rid of it. Paul tells us to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit” (Ephesians 4:3).

- 15.** Paul gives us the perfect example of selflessness in verses 5-11. How is Jesus the best example of humility?

Paul tells us to have the mind of Christ Jesus, which is His Messianic title. W.E. Vines points out that the order of the names and titles of the Lord is always a matter of precision in the New Testament. Vines said, “Christ Jesus’ places the emphasis on the exalted One who ‘emptied

Himself.' Jesus Christ describes the despised and rejected One who was afterwards glorified (2:11) and testifies to His resurrection. 'Christ Jesus' suggests His grace; 'Jesus Christ' suggests His glory. In the Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude, men who had companied with the Lord in the days of His flesh, 'Jesus Christ' is the invariable order of the name and title, for this was the order of their experience: as 'Jesus', they knew Him first; that He was Messiah they learned finally in His resurrection. But Paul came to know Him first in the glory of Heaven (Acts 9:1-6), and his experience being thus the reverse of theirs, the reverse order, 'Christ Jesus,' is of frequent occurrence in his letters, but, with the exception of Acts 24:24, does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament."

16. Explain verse 5 in your own words.

Verse 6 says that Jesus was in the "form" of God. This word comes from the Greek word "morphe" which means never altered or changed. Jesus' unchangeable being is divine. Jesus is God. When He became a man, He did not, and could not, cease to be God.

The phrase "made of no reputation" means "emptied." This word can be used to describe pouring something out until there is nothing left. Jesus never emptied Himself of His deity or of His divine attributes. He never ceased being God. He did, however, willingly empty Himself of the glory and majesty He had with the Father. Jesus was the God-Man. 100% God, 100% man. This is called the Incarnation. "He that knew no sin was made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

John Phillips said, "He is no longer in a cradle! He is no longer on the cross! He is seated now in the place of power! God has exalted Him. He is the Lord from Heaven. He is God over all, blessed forevermore. The day is coming when every tongue will confess Him, and every knee will bow before Him. Calvary was not the end of the story. God has no intentions of letting the cross be the last word in the record of the way people treat His Son." Charles Swindoll writes, "The Father's will mandated that Jesus descended into the lowest depths of suffering for our sins. But once our debt was paid, God again lifted up His Son to a position of highest glory and honor."

17. Christ was obedient, all the way to the cross. Verse 7 tells us that He “made **Himself** of no reputation.” No one else made Him. Read Hebrews 12:1-3. What other details are added concerning His obedience?

18. According to verses 9-11, what was the result of His obedience?

Have you bowed your knee before the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you confessed that He is Lord? You’ve heard the statement, “You’ll either bow now, or you’ll bow later.” Sadly, some will wait for Judgement Day to recognize Him as Lord. He is the King of Kings, and He will reign forever (Psalm 45:6). Is He your King?

19. Verse 5 tells us to think like Christ. Do we empty ourselves of ourselves daily? Do we willingly put the needs of others before our own? Do we think like Christ? Ask the Holy Spirit to do a heart search on this one.

20. Read Philippians 2:12-16. The subject of obedience is linked to the previous verses by the word “therefore.” The result of the obedience of Christ is that He is now exalted and will be worshipped by all. Because obedience is part of Christ’s nature, those of us who profess to know Christ should be striving after obedience in our own lives. **Was there evidence of obedience in the lives of the Philippians?**

21. What do you think Paul means when he says to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”? Does this contradict the fact that salvation is not something we can work for? How do we reconcile this with verses like Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 4:2-8?

We need to remember that Paul is talking to believers, those who are already saved. (1:1, 6, 12) He is exhorting them to get busy and “work out” their salvation in the way of obedience. The phrase “work out” has the idea of bringing to completion. Paul doesn’t want them to stop halfway. And as they “work out” their salvation, God will work in them, giving them the power to accomplish His will. Verse 13 reminds us that it is “God working in them,” not something we can muster up from within ourselves. The Holy Spirit lives inside of us, enabling us to do what He’s called us to do. This verse, then, does not talk about our initial salvation, but the ongoing experience of a right relationship with God. It is about being obedient to what God has called you to do.

- 22.** What does it mean to “fear the Lord”? Read the following verses to help with your answer: Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 3:7-8, Ecclesiastes 12:13. You can share other verses as well.

- 23.** Do you have a healthy “fear” of the Lord? What can happen if a person has no fear of God?

- 24.** Read verse 14. (Yikes!) Are you a grumbler and a complainer? Why is complaining so dishonoring to God? What changes do you need to make? How should a healthy fear of God keep us from complaining?

- 25.** Explain Paul’s exhortation in verses 15-16 in your own words. (Would you say this is our responsibility as Christians?)

God working in us enables us to shine forth as lights, or luminaries. As we fear God and obey His Word, He works in us, making us stand out in

the darkness of this world. We're like nightlights that show people the way in the darkness. The word "blameless" literally means "without reproach." Harmless means "genuine or pure." The "word of life" in verse 16 refers to the Gospel, or the Good News that Jesus died and rose again so a dying world could have life. Paul said to "hold fast" to the word of life, don't let it go.

- 26.** How bright are you shining in your corner of the world? (Are you a nightlight?) Can others that know you see the difference that Christ has made in your life? Is something dulling your light?
- 27.** Why is it so important to "hold fast" to the word of life? How does this world seem to make that so difficult?

Paul's heart would rejoice on the day of Christ if he saw his Philippian friends holding fast to the Gospel. Their diligence would remind him that he didn't pour his life into them for nothing. He didn't run in vain.

- 28.** Read verses 17-18. What picture does Paul use to describe his sacrifice for them?

John Phillips explains verses 17-18 this way: "In Old Testament times, when a person brought an animal sacrifice to God, he also brought wine to be poured out as an accompanying libation. The amount of wine depended on the value of the sacrifice. The more impressive sacrifices required greater amounts of wine (Numbers 15:4-12). And since wine is a symbol of joy in the Bible, we could say, 'The greater the sacrifice, the greater the joy.'"

- 29.** Practically, how can we “pour ourselves out” for others? Are you being “poured out” as a sacrifice for others? Are you willing to be spent for the sake of the Gospel?
- 30.** Read verses 19-30. Paul mentions the character and credentials of two of his friends that were good examples of Christian men. Name the two men and note what Paul says about them.

Man #1

Man #2-

Paul wanted to know how the Philippians were doing. He wasn't sure if he would be able to get there, so he sent Timothy, his son in the faith. This section again shows us the love Paul had for the people of God. Like he said in verse 17, he was poured out for them.

We've talked about Timothy before in our study. Timothy was brought up by a mom and a grandmother who taught him the Scriptures at an early age (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15). His dad was Greek (Acts 16:1). Timothy was Paul's “spiritual son,” having been converted on Paul's first missionary journey to Lystra. He traveled with Paul to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Ephesus. Timothy was there when the church in Philippi was founded. Timothy had a very special place in Paul's heart, as well as in the Philippians'. His character had been proven; they knew what he was made of.

- 31.** What seemed to be wrong with the state of the church in Rome, according to verse 21?

32. Is this characteristic of the church today? What do you think about this quote: “The curse of the local church today is lack of commitment”?

Paul said that he couldn’t find anyone, besides Timothy, who would “care” for their well-being. I’m sure Paul shared his concerns and thoughts about the church in Philippi with the Christians in Rome, but they obviously didn’t care enough about the work of the Lord among the Philippians to do something about it. They didn’t want to invest themselves to that degree. Stuart Briscoe, in his book Bound for Joy, points out that it wasn’t that they didn’t care, or didn’t care enough, but they cared about themselves. We need to care enough that we want to devote time and energy and ability in the lives of others for the glory of God. He said, “The person who cares for his own things to the exclusion of the things of God and the needs of people has missed the boat of Christian service.”

Paul had great things to say about Epaphroditus, which means a lot, coming from Paul. He was not only his brother in the faith, but he was also a fellow laborer. He had been sent to minister to Paul’s needs when the Philippians fell short. Notice that he was distressed, not because he was away from home, or because he was sick, but because he was afraid his family and friends would be concerned about him (vs. 26). The word “distressed” means “full of heaviness, or full of anguish and deep distress.” His depression was not due to self pity, or homesickness, but concern for others. He is a great example of Paul’s exhortation to put on the spirit of Christ, which is humility.

33. How sick was Epaphroditus? Did he get well?

Paul tells us that Epaphroditus didn’t “regard his life.” This is a gambling word that means he was prepared to gamble, to take risks with his own well-being, for the sake of the ministry. Handley Moule wrote, “On account of Christ’s work he was at death’s very door, playing as it were the gambler with his life.”

- 34.** Are you prepared to gamble, or take risks with your own well-being for the sake of the Lord, and others?
- 35.** How did Paul tell them to receive Epaphroditus when he sent him home?

I'm so glad we had a chance to meet Epaphroditus. He came to minister to Paul and sickness wasn't going to stop him. What a neat example of selfless giving this man is to us. While Paul uses him as an example in sickness, he uses Timothy as an example in service, and Jesus Christ as our example in sacrifice. I pray that we will learn how to be selfless in our ministry to the Lord. God bless you ladies as you seek to "hold fast" to the word of life. See you next week!

