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Humility is Essential for Unity; Phil 2:1-11

GPBC

1.22.23

Introduction – Last week we concluded ch1 with Paul calling us to join him in this life of holy joy – to live is Christ, to die is gain. Remember Paul implores us that our manner of life must showcase the gospel of Christ. Paul calls on us to stand firm, to strive, not solo but side by side, with unity. We can't stand firm and strive for the faith on our own, we need each other and therefore we need unity. Paul writes, "in one spirit, with one mind."

The essential ingredient that enables the church to stay in the fight and be effective advancing the gospel, the main ingredient, is unity! We've got to have it, or everything else will come to nothing. Ill. Baking a cake.

Paul knows unity is the main thing. So what he just glanced over in last week's passage, he now dives deep in these 11 verses. This is the hard work, this is where the rubber meets the road, this is the difference between the fellowships that are sweet with unity and those that are bitter without it. Y'all ready for this? It's going to get deep and difficult before it gets sweet! You have to have unity as a whole to advance the gospel, and to have unity as a whole, each individual member has to have humility. That's the hard heart work that is essential for unity. 90% of the work and fight of the Christian faith is in the heart. But when a congregation is filled with humility, there arises a fragrance and flavor of unity that makes the gospel irresistible to those who smell and taste it and a blessing of joy to those who have it!

- I. A Call for Unity (vv1-2)
  - a. The first thing Paul tells us is to assemble all the resources God has abundantly supplied at our disposal. Unity is a difficult but it's not impossible, especially for the people of God, because God has given to us all that we need to pursue unity and obtain it! 5 things.
    - i. Encouragement in Christ – Did you know that Christ Himself is for our unity in Him? Christ, who dwells inside each one of us by faith, encourages us to pursue unity with one another. How do you know that pastor? Because that's what He prayed for! John 17:20-23

- ii. Comfort from love – you know there is a level of comfort that washes over us when we know we are loved. It comforts away loneliness and inwardness. But when we think that God, who sits in the heavens, has loved us from before the foundation of the world, rotten sinners as we are, an extraordinary comfort washes over our souls that empowers us for whatever and wherever God leads us. Before He said, “Let there be...” He said, “You are loved.” As long as I know He loves me, I have no problem following Him, even in the difficult parts of this journey. And when we stop and think God loves you just like He loves me, unity becomes less difficult to achieve.
  - iii. Participation in the Spirit – God’s not going to call us to something He has not given us the power to accomplish, not our power, but the power of the living God who lives inside us! Jesus prayed that we would be one and the Spirit works in our hearts to make it so. The Spirit wants to make sure Jesus’ prayer gets answered! Hey, thank God it’s not left up to us! “Well I don’t know if I can do this unity thing or not.” Newsflash – you can’t! I can’t. But God hasn’t left us on our own. Lean on the Spirit, that’s who gives us the strength to do the hard heart work!
  - iv. Affection – Do we love one another? Are we moved in our hearts toward one another?
  - v. Sympathy – Do we hurt when we see each other hurt? Spiritual sympathy – heartache to see a brother struggle. Do we sympathize with weak, struggling faith? Do you know if God dwells within us our disposition toward one another will increasingly lean into God’s disposition toward others?
- b. Hear Paul speak to our hearts this morning – God has generously, graciously already given to us all that we need to keep unity – to be one. Paul says that’s what his joy is waiting on. When he hears the church at Philippi is one, his joy will overflow, because if they are one, nothing will be able to stop what God has in store!!
  - c. Listen to the picture of unity Paul paints in words – being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and of one mind. That’s not pretend unity. That’s authentic. That’s down to the bone. That’s real. That’s not unity talk, that’s unity walk. When a church

develops that kind of sameness and harmony, the air is thick. You can taste it!

- d. We have what we need to get it but we all, individually, will have to do the hard, heart work of humility to realize unity's potential.

## II. A Crisis of Faith (vv3-4)

- a. A crisis of faith occurs when Scripture calls us to do the opposite of what we naturally, in our fallenness, would rather do, believe we should do, or listen to others tell us to do. In other words, we're not inclined to be humble; we're inclined to be selfish. III. Song. We have to believe that being humble is going to be better for us than being selfish.
- b. That's hard, difficult heart work. It's not easy to get self off the throne. It's not easy to get self out of the center.
- c. Paul says do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.
  - i. Ambition is a strong desire to achieve something. Now there's nothing wrong with having goals and striving to achieve. But selfish ambition means if I have to walk over you to get what I want, I will! Selfish ambition means I'm going to get what I want no matter what your wants/needs may be. "I" matters more than "you." Let's just stop and ask the question of our desires – do we have any desires, are we pursuing anything, that's actually for the good of another and not ourselves?  
Psalm 119:36
  - ii. Conceit – vainly inward – the world revolves around us.
  - iii. In humility – because that's the only way this will happen – in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Now we need to put this in a spiritual context. This means we convince ourselves that your spiritual needs and your spiritual growth matters more than mine does!
- d. V4 – let each of you – you see – individual humility produces corporate unity! V4 – What would be in your best spiritual interest? And what can I do to make that happen? What can I do to help you blossom and thrive spiritually? When we have a whole congregation of individuals who think like that, the sweet flavor of unity saturates the church.

- i. We've all heard the stories of churches splitting over the color of the carpet. I don't think we're in danger of losing unity over the carpet, but we might be tested in other areas. What if we stopped asking the question what do I want and started asking the question what do they need! Or how can we reach them?
- e. Humility. Humility. You know sometimes we have a view of the Christian faith that says what's most important in my walk with the Lord is how high I can fly. But it seems to me the Bible's view is how low can you go. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up. In terms of the posture of our hearts as it relates to one another, our goal should be to people low to the ground. How can I stoop to help you stand.

### III. The Christ to Follow (vv5-8)

- a. Specifics of this text next week
- b. How are we going to have that kind of radical, God-centered, others-centered, other-worldly humility. Follow Christ. Look to Christ. Pattern our hearts after the heart of Christ.
- c. Look how far Christ humbled Himself to save you!
  - i. V6 – He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He didn't show up in all of His radiant majesty. He showed up in a manger. From glory to a stable. From heaven to earth. No one has traveled further down the ladder of humility than Christ! He didn't hide His deity, but He didn't parade it either.
  - ii. V7 – emptied Himself – He didn't lose His deity, but He did veil His deity in human flesh. In the form of a servant, not the form of a king – born in the likeness of men. Throughout history rulers, dictators, kings – men who rule over men, have portrayed themselves as god. But when God, who does rule over all men, came to earth, He came as a servant. Humility was exemplified not only in His change of location, but in His appearance. And also in the posture of His heart for the purpose for which He came
  - iii. V8 –
- d. Have that mind in yourselves, and you've got it! If you've got humility, you'll have unity, and if you have unity, you'll advance the gospel!