

Finding Joy in Empty Places

Finding Joy in Hard Times--part 4

October 7, 2018

Philippians 2:1-11

DAY 1: "The proof of the pudding is in the tasting"

*Philippians 2:1 **If** you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, **if** any comfort from his love, **if** any fellowship with the Spirit, **if** any tenderness and compassion, ² **then** make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*

1. As you know, anyone can claim to be a Christian. Whether one actually is or not is an entirely different question! I know, because I assumed I was a Christian the first twenty years of my life! I assumed I was a Christian because I believed the basic tenets of Christianity.

2. I believed in the triune God, that I was a sinner, and needed salvation. I believed that Jesus died for sin, including mine. When I attended church I had "worshipful" feelings. Ironically, I had no idea I was NOT a Christian. I "should have" known, since I was living 6.5 days a week any old way I wanted. I called Jesus Christ "Lord," but I was "lord" of my life.

3. Our text begins with an "if-then." "If this is true, then you should do that." Actually, Paul begins with FOUR "ifs" and four "thens."

a. *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,*

b. *if any comfort from his love,*

c. *if any fellowship with the Spirit,*

d. *if any tenderness and compassion,*

4. What strikes you about these four "ifs?"

5. What strikes you about the importance of the four "then" statement in verse 2?

...(1) *being like-minded*, (2) *having the same love*, being (3) *one in spirit* and (4) *purpose*.

6. "The proof of the pudding is in the tasting," means it doesn't matter how good you think the recipe is. What matters is how it tastes. The same is true for Christianity.

7. The effect of our theology is to have an impact on our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is clearly not enough just to espouse the right doctrine. The right doctrine must be applied in such a way that the quality of our church relationships reveal something of the wonder of relationships within the Trinity (See John 17 for more details).

8. Intimate love is not just something that "happens." It has to be built. It must be intentional, as Paul implies in these verses.

DAY 2: Building close relationships

1. Yesterday we looked at four relational effects. Today, and the rest of our week, Paul gives us how this is done, and how it was modeled by Jesus.

2. Today we look at how intimacy is built.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Philippians 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

3. The bible assumes, correctly, our broken human nature, that we are sinners, meaning, we “miss the target,” we “fall short,” we are bent in on ourselves as our highest priority rather than to God and others as high priority.

4. Paul points out what we are *apt* to do, what comes “naturally” to us, what we will do unless we intentionally think otherwise. Three are listed below. Next to each, jot down your thoughts as to how they relate to how you live and act...

a. “*Selfish ambition*” -

b. “*Vain conceit*” –

c. “*Looking to your own interests* (substantially, to the neglect of others’ interests)-

5. He then gives us three antidotes to the traits that come “naturally” to us. They are listed below. Next to each, jot down your thoughts as to how they relate to how you live, think, and act...

a. “*in humility*” -

b. “*consider others better than yourselves*” -

c. “*look ... to the interests of others*” -

6. As you think about how you live, act and think, what strikes you most from today’s verses?

DAY 3: Following the model of Christ...

1. Building relationships, intentionally, for the sake of someone else over yourself is a lot of work.
2. When we try to live this way we will inevitably draw a very discouraging (but necessary and realistic) conclusion: others don't seem to be relating to me this way, or so it seems.
3. When this realization happens we come to a crossroads. If the effort I put in is not returned, why bother? What's the use? Which brings us to today's verses.

Philippians 2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

4. This verse, of course, begs the question. What was the attitude Jesus had? How would you answer this question?

5. Paul goes on to elaborate not only the attitude of Jesus, but how He illustrated that attitude.

Philippians 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

6. Paul takes us back in time before the incarnation, before what we call Christmas. God the Son enjoyed perfect, loving relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

7. As *God*, He is the most important being of anyone. Within the Trinity, Jesus experienced perfect love, affection, respect, and every godly form of relationship.

8. But then, He came *here*. And He was certainly not treated as He should have been treated. When you're not treated like you think you deserve to be treated what is your response?

9. When Jesus was treated with contempt His attitude was all-important. When Paul says that Jesus "*did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.*" He was not hanging on to His "right" to be treated a certain way.

Philippians 2:7 ...but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

10. The phrase, "made himself nothing" means He "emptied Himself."

11. We might say of ourselves, we "said 'no' to our ego," or we "put ego aside." This is one picture of the humility Paul called us to back in v. 3.

DAY 4: Emptying Himself for us

Philippians 2:7 ...but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

1. Jesus not only “emptied” Himself, but He also took “the very nature of a servant.”
2. What is the attitude of a servant? What was Jesus’ attitude as “a servant?”
3. From an eternity in heaven, in perfect relationship, down, down, down to this earth He came, and was treated like a nobody. That’s quite a descent. But the descent goes farther down.

4. The descent of Jesus, downward, takes four more precipitous falls.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

- a. He became a man with flesh and bones, just like one of us, except without the sin nature.
- b. He humbled Himself.
- c. He became “obedient” to death
- d. He allowed Himself to be publicly humiliated and suffer in the cruelest way known to man—public execution on a cross.

5. What strikes you about Jesus’ chosen descent, from an eternity in heaven, to the worst of what man and “earth” could throw at Him?

6. Why would He undertake all of that?

7. This descent fills in some details and illustrates what it means to have the attitude of Jesus. How do these last two verses strike you? What do you want to “add” to your attitude?

DAY 5: The glorious paradox

1. All through the bible, there is a glorious paradox. We lose life to gain life. We give, but gain more. We serve, but the rewards for serving (eventually) outweigh the cost of serving.

John 12:24 “Truly, truly, I tell you. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”

Mark 8:34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

³⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

³⁶ What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

³⁷ Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

2. At the end of the long descent of Jesus that led Him to the very worst, he took every human sin against God, others, and self, and bore it in Himself. Just a few brief thoughts into anyone's history brings to light the horrors of what He undertook—on our behalf!

3. But was it worth it? It was the same question we asked earlier this week! Is all this sacrifice for others' benefit, even if and when seemingly little is reciprocated, worth it?

4. God's story will end in wondrous triumph. Here we have a “sneak preview” into the glory of what's to come.

Philippians 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

5. We will worship Jesus when we get an even clearer grasp and realization of what He undertook for us.

6. But the example of Jesus is Paul's way of illustrating what it means to be a Christian.

7. How does this week's passage shift your thinking into how you are to live as a Christian?