

SERVING OTHERS Sunday School- August 8, 2010

Unifying Topic: GIVING OF ONESELF

Lesson Text

I. A Call For Unity (Philippians 2:1-4)

II. Be Like Christ (Philippians 2:5-11)

III. Work It out (Philippians 2:12-13)

The Main Thought: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5, KJV).

Unifying Principle: We live in a culture in which we are encouraged to pursue our dreams at any cost and to fight for our rights. Where can we find more to life than a selfish pursuit of our own happiness at the expense of others? God calls us, through Jesus' example, to find in serving others.

Lesson Aim: The lesson aim is to teach believers how to serve God through serving others.

Life Aim: To reach students the importance of unity and humility in service to God.

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- 2:1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,
2:2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.
2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.
2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

HISTORY:

In **Chapter 1**, Paul reported on his own situation in prison and asked for prayer so that he would represent Christ there as he should. He then encouraged the Philippian Christians to stand firm under their own sufferings and to live a life worthy of the gospel. Their "*conflict*" (*Gr agōn*) signifies a contest of athletes or the inner conflict of the soul. The inner conflict is often the result of an outward conflict of struggle. It was not strange that faithful disciples should experience the same persecution as their teacher. Followers of Jesus must also deny self and take up a cross. But in doing so we are safe and in Christ we find life by losing it for His sake and that of the lost. Whatever we give up is more than returned to us. Paul urges the Christians at Philippi to fight together for the *faith. Paul was an example and an encourager to the Philippians.

LESSON:

Philippians 2:1-4 A Call For Unity

The Philippian church was a very strong church. When a church is strong, it is always full of vision and planning, and it is always working out a strategy to carry forth the gospel. The point is this: the more strength and activity a church has, the more attention it must give to unity. Why? Because a strong church has more minds and bodies working, and where more people are working more differences are bound to arise. Consequently, the members must give more attention to unity. This is the subject of Chapter two: the steps to unity. **The first step to unity is Christ**—allowing His life to be lived out in us. In particular there are seven traits that will hold the church together and keep it unified.

1. The trait of "*consolation*" (*parakesis*). The word means many things throughout scripture; but in the present context it means encouragement, comfort, solace, exhortation, and strengthening. Note that this trait is a characteristic of Christ Himself.
2. The trait of "*love*." There is a "*comfort*" (*paramuthion*) of love that is in Christ. The love of Christ stirs a person to keep the unity with other believers. The love is agape love; the love that is selfless and sacrificial.
3. The trait of "*fellowship in the Spirit*."

- The Holy Spirit enters the believer's heart and life to comfort, guide, teach, equip, and use him as a witness for Christ.
 - The Holy Spirit creates a spiritual union between the new believer and other believers. The mind of the Holy Spirit is set upon unity and fellowship by melting and molding hearts—all centered around Jesus Christ and His mission.
4. The trait of "compassion." Compassion is the trait that stirred Christ to reach out toward us. Compassion is the force that drives Him to keep after us time and time again—even if we are in rebellion and stand opposed to Him. What would happen if we were driven by compassion to go after those...?
- who have been hurt? • who differed? • who withdrew? • who have been disturbed? • who were critical?
5. **2:2** The trait of "joy"—"Fulfill my joy." The one thing that brings joy to a church quicker than anything else is unity. Nothing causes a teacher or shepherd more joy than seeing Christians who were born under his teaching now maturing into the loving, serving, giving nature of Jesus. And nothing brings more grief than having the fruit of one's work and sacrifice destroyed by division. Joy is always disturbed when there is criticism, dissatisfaction, grumbling, murmuring, cliques, opposition, and a host of other divisive negatives. We are to worship, plan, organize, build, staff, finance, minister, and serve in the joy of Christ. But the only way we can do that is...
- to be likeminded. • to be of one accord. • to be of one mind.

Paul has the same deep concern for unity that Jesus did before He died. Unity is absolutely essential to the survival and effectiveness of the church in reaching out to the lost. It is the Spirit described in verse 1 which makes unity possible.

6. **2:3** The trait of "humility or lowliness of mind" (*tapeinos*): to offer oneself as lowly and submissive; to walk in a spirit of lowliness; to present oneself as lowly and low-lying in mind; to be of low degree and low rank; not to be high-minded, proud, haughty, arrogant, or assertive. Selfishness and pride are the main causes of division and broken relationships. These attitudes belong to the old fallen, sinful nature. Note two significant points:

1. A strong and active church will always have two problems: strife and empty glory.
 - a. Some people are just going to strive with others. They are not mature in the Lord, not yet; therefore, they give in to...
 - Talking about differences • jealousy • envy • desire for position
 - Desire for recognition • opposition • loving flattery • forming cliques
 If they do not get their way or what they want, they strive against the church or other members. The result is disunity and divisiveness.
 - b. Some people are going to seek glory within the church. But note what scripture calls it: vainglory, which means empty glory. Some people just want the attention, the recognition, the position, the flattery, the praise, the honor. They want people seeking their advice and counsel and opinion. They want to be on the major committees and acknowledged as a leader of the church.
2. The spirit that must prevail in a strong church is that of humility or lowliness of mind. This humility is foreign to our earthly nature, but it is the norm for God's children to think like he does.

Practicing humility requires two things: an honest evaluation of oneself and courage.

And Humility reaps unbelievable benefits;

1. Humility results in a person coming to Christ and learning of Him. It leads to self-evaluation—an honest and courageous evaluation. When a person looks at Jesus Christ, he sees what he should be and it motivates him to become.
2. Humility results in conversion, assuring our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
3. Humility results in our being exalted by Christ in that glorious day of redemption.
4. Humility results in healthy relationships.

Humility reaches its height when we lose our lives in the cause of Christ and welfare of others.

7. **2:4** The trait of "controlling, self-interest." Very simply a Christian believer must forget himself. He must quit looking upon his own things, his...
- ambition • desires • position • wants • being neglected • being overlooked • being by-passed
 - being ignored • not being recognized • not being honored • not being given the position

Believers are to concentrate on Christ; His ministry to people, and reaching the world with the glorious gospel of salvation. They are not to focus upon self. Showing genuine interest in others is one way to strive actively for unity.

Philippians 2:5-11 Be Like Christ

We are not to be like "Mike" but to be like Christ! This passage paints the perfect picture of humility of Jesus Christ. The church is too often divided, too often rumbling with criticism, murmuring, differences, jealousy, envy, ambition, outside talk, negative feelings, and desires for position and recognition. We are to let the humility of Jesus Christ flow in and out of our minds. If Christ is the first step to unity, then, **Humility is the second step to unity**. The unity of a church depends upon one thing: its members being like Christ—walking in humility. Just imagine the step down that Jesus Christ had to take to become a Man. The very same mind that existed in Jesus Christ—that led Christ to give up everything He was and had—that very mind is to be in us. It was by laying down His life for the sake of others that Jesus overcame Satan and all his powers.

Unless we step down and humble ourselves—step down to where hurting people are—these problems will never be solved. It is the key to healing marriages, churches, and the world.

- Husbands and wives get locked in struggles over control and rights. Their whole relationship would be transformed if each knew how to let go of his life and his rights in order to find life.
- A church sometimes become paralyzed as members struggle for power and pursues their conflicting selfish agendas. The church could be set free to do God's work if everyone learned how to wash their own opponents' feet and serve one another instead of themselves.
- Some countries and ethnic groups seem locked in endless war with each other. The destroying could end immediately if each let go of their own concerns and began thinking of their enemy's needs.

This is the point of the present passage: Jesus Christ *set* and *focused His mind* upon humbling Himself. He took all He was and had and came down to where we are and met our need. Christ knows it is the key to unity.

2:6 Paul affirms that Jesus eternally has been God.

1. Jesus Christ is of the being of God. The word "*being*" (*huparchon*) means existence, what a person is within and without. It is the very essence of a person, what a person is; that part of a person that cannot be changed. It is who a person is and all that he is.
2. Jesus Christ is "*in the form of God.*" The word "*form*" (*morphe*) means the permanent, constant being of a person. It is the very essence of a person, that part of him that never changes. It is the unchangeable being. i.e., a man is always "*changing*" (*schema*) in looks because of age and fashion. But his "*form*" (*morphe*) never changes. This means Jesus is of the very essence and being and image of God. He is the divine, unchangeable God Himself. He dwells in the very perfectness and essence of God; the very attributes of God Himself.
3. Jesus Christ "*is equal with God.*" The word "*equal*" (*Gr isha*) means to be "*on an equal basis with God*"; to possess all the qualities and attributes of God Himself. Note also the word "*robbery*" (*arpagmon*). It is the picture of a thief seeking to snatch or take something that is not his. Was He a thief? Was He robbing and snatching the title of God or was He truly God? The answer is that Christ did not have to rob or snatch at equality with God. He did not have to rob and grasp after the deity of God; He was already on an equal basis with God.

2:7 Humility:

1. Christ "*emptied*" (*ekenosen*) Himself and became a man. He made Himself "*of no reputation*" (waived His status or standing). He did not give up His deity to become human, but He *set aside the right* to His glory and power, in submission to the Father's will He limited His power and knowledge. He was the Lord and Master of the universe, who deserved all the honor and service of all living creatures, but He took upon Himself the "*form of a servant*" (a slave). He became the Servant of men.
 - The Lord whom we are to serve came and served us.
 - The Lord whom we are to love came and loved us.
 - The Lord whom we are to adore came and adored us.
 - The Lord whom we are to wait upon came and waited upon us.
 - The Lord whom we are to minister to came and ministered to us.
 - The Lord whom we are to seek came and sought us.

2. Jesus Christ "*was made in the likeness of men.*" The word "*was made*" (*genomai*) means to become; a

definite entrance into time. It is not a permanent state. Jesus became a man, but it was not to be a permanent state. It was only for a time, a particular period. "*Likeness*" denies identity. It refers to an outward expression that is assumed from the outside and does not come from within. "*Likeness*" means similarity, but not sameness. Christ was not identical with man. He was the God-man; fully God and fully man. His humanity was the vehicle through which He manifested Himself as a slave.

2:8 Now we view the humiliation of Christ from the viewpoint of those who saw Him. Christ was the God-man, but as people looked at Him they saw the appearance (*Gk., schema, "outward form"*) of a man—"being found in fashion as a man." *Christ humbled Himself* to the point of utter humiliation; to the very point of death; "*even to the death of the cross*", which was for criminals. His example extended beyond humility to obedience. This was the ultimate test of obedience. Two points:

1. Jesus Christ humbled Himself to the Father. He was obedient to God the Father. It was the Father's "*Will*" for Christ to come to earth and to die for the sins of men; and Christ did it.
2. Jesus Christ humbled Himself to men. He willingly allowed men to kill Him. He did not have to bear such hostile humiliation and rebellion; but He did.

The point is: Already He had given up heavenly glory which He had a right to keep. Now He gives up even His human life which He also had a right to keep. He does not just submit to death, but even death on a cross! It carried the greatest shame and the most terrible agony of pain.

2:9 The word "*Wherefore*", at the beginning of v.9 connects with verses 5-8. It was because of Christ's humiliation that God exalted Him--the two are inseparable. God rewarded Christ by exalting Him ever so highly because he humbled Himself and served. This verse, with its clear statement of Jesus' deity, is powerful ammunition against those who deny His deity.

1. **(2:9)** God has given Christ a name above every name. For His name is...
 - the name that forgives our sins.
 - the name that gives us access into God's presence and more.
2. **(2:10)** God has given Christ supreme power and authority. God has destined every knee to bow before Christ—the knees of everything in heaven and earth and under the earth. Nothing shall be exempt.
 - "*Of those in heaven*" means angels and people who have gone to heaven.
 - "*Those on earth*" refers to human beings who are alive in time.
 - "*Those under the earth*" probably refers to fallen angels.
3. **(2:11)** God has given Christ supreme worship. God is going to see to it that every creature confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We can do it now as we submit our lives to Him, or we can do it at the judgment when we all stand before His throne.
 - Worship must have content (substance). To worship out of an emotional emptiness does not honor the Lord. He is to be worshiped for something (His deity, the incarnation, worthiness, death, resurrection and His ascension).
 - Every tongue shall profess openly that Christ is Lord. The word "*Lord*" (*kurios*) means master, owner, and equivalent to the Old Testament word "*Jehovah*." God made Him both Lord and Christ!
 - This passage does not teach that ultimately all the lost will be saved, as taught by many cults.

Philippians 2:12-13 Work It out

Believers are to "*work out their own salvation*" with fear and trembling. What does this mean? The word "*work out*" (*katargazesthe*) means to work on to the finish, to completion, to perfection. It always means to complete the effort and the work begun; to accomplish it perfectly. The point is: do not go half-way in salvation. Do not take bits and pieces when there is a whole parcel. Do not be satisfied with a little when you can have much. Go on; grow until salvation is completed in you. It is *your own salvation*. Once God has saved a person, that person is to get busy obeying God. He is to take hold of the new life and salvation God has given him, and he is to work on it until it is completed and finished, that is, until God takes him home and perfects it.

Paul says that *they had always obeyed God, not only when he was with them, but also when he was away*. Now, as he was facing death, he wanted them more than ever to work out their salvation—to continue obeying God. Note the word "*fear and trembling*."

- We are to fear and tremble because of the trials and temptations of life. Anyone of them can throw us off or cause us to buckle under. The world and its temptations and trials are strong and the flesh is weak.
- We are to fear and tremble lest we disappoint the Lord. He saved us; He went to the ultimate limit;

He demonstrated a perfect love by taking all our sins upon Himself and bearing our punishment. Therefore, when we sin and fail, it cuts His heart to no end.

- We are to fear and tremble because we are to face the judgment seat of Christ. If we sin and fail to work out our own salvation we shall be judged severely and suffer loss—great loss.

2:13 As we work out our own salvation, we to obey—obeying the stirrings of God within their hearts. The word "*worketh*" (*energion*) means to energize. God arouses, stirs, and energizes the heart of the believer to do God's "*Will*." These stirrings are of God—"giving us both the will and power to do what pleases Him." It means that God does not leave us alone to work out our salvation and deliverance. The point to see is: God is forever working within us to complete our salvation (the work of sanctification). The tragedy is this: ignoring, neglecting, and refusing to respond to the stirrings and workings of God. Although the believer is responsible to work, the Lord actually produces the good works and spiritual fruit in the lives of believers. This is accomplished because He works through us by His indwelling Spirit. Keep in mind that salvation means deliverance. If the church is to be unified—if the believers are to walk in a spirit of unity, then they must look at their salvation—at the whole scope of their life and the glorious salvation God has given them—and they must do all they can to work out their own deliverance by obeying Him.

SUMMARY:

Paul is already very happy about the Christians' joy. He wants to hear that they are living at peace with each other. They must show Christ's love to other people. They can do this, only if they show love to each other. If they are not united, their witness to the world will be weak. He's says, ¹ (2:1-4) If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care— then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

The point is this: Having the traits of consolation, love, fellowship in the Spirit, compassion, concern for one another's joy, humility or lowliness of mind, and controlling self-interest are the traits seen in Christ. Having Christ; being like Him is the first step to standing as a unified church. And humility has to go along as the second step to that unity.

Most people in the world at that time thought that to be humble was to be weak. However, if they are not united, their witness to the world will be weak. They must show Christ's love to other people. They can do this, only if they show love to each other. There has to be a right attitude for maintaining unity: Do nothing through selfish ambition or conceit; with lowliness of mind let each one esteem others better than himself; be concerned for the interest of others; and let the mind that was in Christ be in them.

Jesus did not need to seize the same honour as God. It was always His by right. Nor did he have to try to hold on to the same honour as God. He laid it aside on behalf of all people. ² (2:7) Jesus gave up his riches in heaven in order to become a servant. "*He was rich. But he made himself poor to help you*" (2Corinth.8:9). He left his home in heaven. And he had no home on earth that he could call his own (Lk. 9:58). He gave up the glory that he had with his Father. He had that glory with the Father before he created the world (Jh.17:5). Even angels gave honour to him. But he became a person to whom people refused to give honour. He became a real man. He was like men in every way except that he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). He became hungry (Mk.11:12), thirsty (Jh.4:7) and tired (Lk.8:23). He was very happy (Jh.15:11), but he could weep (Jh.11:35). Jesus said, "*I am among you as a man who serves*" (Lk.22:27). He became a servant. He even performed a very humble task. He washed his disciples' feet (Jh.13:5). His stay on earth was not permanent. "*The Word became human and he stayed for a time among us*" (Jh.1:14). ^(2:8) Paul emphasised that Christ obeyed God even as far as death. Death on a cross was a cruel punishment for slaves and criminals. Jews believed that anyone who died on a cross was beyond God's grace. (See Deut.21:23). Therefore it was hard for Jews to believe that Christ's death on the cross was on behalf of all people (Gal.3:13). Nobody can explain how Jesus can be both God and man. The mystery of God's great love and Jesus' great sacrifice can only cause us to worship. And, as Paul hoped for the Christians at Philippi, it can cause a

¹ <http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%20&version=MSG>

² <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/philippians-lbw.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sunday-school.html>

humble attitude towards other people.

(2:9) God raised Jesus from death to be in the highest place of honour. (V2:0-11) The name "*higher than any other name*" that God gave Him was "*Lord*." Obedience is the key. At His name all should bow and confess Him to be Lord—"Of those in heaven" means angels and people who have gone to heaven; "*those on earth*" refers to human beings who are alive in time; "*those under the earth*" probably refers to fallen angels. When people give honor to Jesus, they will be giving honor to God the Father.

(2:12) Paul is no longer with them. So the Christians at Philippi must trust and obey God. They were to "*work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*." Paul does not mean that the Christians at Philippi must work to earn their salvation. ³But if working out our salvation does not mean working for our salvation then what does it mean? --Working out our salvation means that we will exert the necessary effort to live out a life of obedience consistent with the gift of salvation. The question: Are you putting out the effort to put off the things in your life that you know are displeasing to God? And are you putting out the effort to put on the things that are pleasing to God? --Working out our salvation means that we are willing to exert the effort to become what we know we should be in Christ. "*Work out*" has the idea of bringing to completion, to a conclusion, not to stop half way.

Why would we be so devoted to this effort that we would do so with fear and trembling? Because exerting the necessary effort to live out a life of obedience consistent with our salvation tells us whether we are saved or not saved. Who is responsible for our sanctification? We were responsible. That is only a partial answer. However, based on Phil.2:13, God is totally responsible for our sanctification and all the praise, honor, and glory for our success should go to Him. How do we know this? Paul says, (2:13) "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*." The Philippian Christians are not left to themselves to achieve such a high spiritual goal such as working out their salvation and neither are we. His power propels us forward toward righteousness and away from sin. Care must be taken. As Jesus obeyed God right to the end, so must all of us. Jesus is their model. Christians are responsible to work with God. God Himself is willing and working at what will give Him the most pleasure.

APPLICATION:

Attitude is central to the Christian way of life. Is it bitter and resentful or is it likeminded, having the same love as Jesus? If Jesus regarded no sacrifice too great, no humiliation too painful, should not we have this sacrificial attitude toward fellow Christians?