

THE COMMUNITY OF JOY:
11. “Young Messengers of Grace!”
Philippians 2:19 – 30

Introduction:

As we continue with our series on the letter of Paul to the Philippians and what it speaks to our congregational life, we are drawing to a conclusion our look at chapter 2. Our look at the book as a whole has shown us some rather remarkable and timeless truth, not only applicable to Philippi in the first century but also in Mifflintown, PA in 2022. Life is hard sometimes but the Lord lives in us, and because He does there is power in our lives to live above our circumstances.

Pastor Paul’s words to the Philippian church are so relevant to us today. He was encouraging them to walk with God by faith regardless of their circumstances. In the first four verses of chapter two he encouraged the people to **Unity** in the body. In verse 5 he encouraged them to reflect our Lord Jesus’ **Attitude** in the way they chose to think and live!

Paul wrote to these believers to encourage them to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. One of Paul’s major themes of this letter is that he called them to “live a life of joy,” regardless of the circumstances they faced. **Christianity is at its very core, a Kingdom of the Heart.** It is a living relationship between two people who love each other, the One is the King of Glory and the other is His child, in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

It’s a matter of knowing the Lord Jesus by faith deeply from the heart, as opposed to a way to live or a set of rules one keeps! In the Bible the heart is the **Seat** of our **Affections**, the place of decision-making, from which ultimately our lifestyle choices and our behaviors flow.

Our Lord Jesus spent an incredible amount of time in His teaching ministry focused on the hearts of people being changed. There is an equation of sorts in His teaching aimed at the hearts of His hearers both then and now; **transformed Desires equal kingdom Living.** Listen to what Jesus says about the primary importance of what we cherish in our hearts, what we desire and long for.

Matthew 12:33 – 35 *“Either make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? **For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.** The good person **out of the good treasure** brings forth good, and the evil person **out of his evil treasure** brings forth evil.”*

If anyone had a right to think about what was wrong, to have his mind set on how bad things were Paul has that right! But he doesn’t take it! Paul’s situation was his second imprisonment in Rome ordered by the emperor Nero, Paul knows he is not coming out of the dungeon where Luke comes to visit him daily and pens letters for him! He knows he is going to die. It is only a question of when!

Compounding the situation, he was in was that Paul had some enemies who had, with resolve and determination, set themselves to oppose what he was trying to do and were out to discredit him in the eyes of all men, Rome, Judaism, and the church: There were those who wanted him dead, and there were others who were preaching Christ to make a big name for themselves at Paul’s expense.

The context of chapter 2 is unity and oneness through having the same mindset, attitude, or disposition with one another as a church: The mindset of Jesus. The key verse is verse 5; *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”* What was this mindset or attitude of Christ Jesus? The Scriptures clearly answer this question!

John 6:38 *“For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but to do the will of Him who sent me.”*

Hebrews 5:8: *“Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered.”*

Hebrews 10:7 *“Then I said, ‘Here I am - it is written about me in the scroll – I have come to do your will, O God.’”*

Pastor Paul’s deep longing in this verse *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus,”* and my desire for us as a congregation is that we shall be so **Intimate** with **Jesus** that we will both cherish His attitude in us and cultivate His attitude in us.

Brothers and sisters, if we are truly saved from sin, washed in the blood of Jesus then the Spirit of the living God has come into our hearts to dwell and **the primary function of the Holy Spirit is to make the heart, the life, the mindset of Jesus alive in my life:** To **Press** the **Image** of the Lord Jesus’ life in my life, beginning with my mindset or attitude and then also to actions and reactions. And if that is true, and it is, then the absolute primary passion of the genuine believer is to reflect Jesus Christ in his living!

When we were together last week my brother Garrick focused on the words *“continue to work out your salvation for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”* Paul just couldn’t get over the fact that God had wrought salvation in his heart when Christ came into his life and he called his readers to understand salvation is God’s work not mine. If God had not wrought my salvation in Christ I would still be lost!

The miracle of the Christian life is *“Christ in you the hope of glory.”* *“Therefore, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purposes.”* The Lord’s transforming power in my life makes it possible for me to both **Desire** His will in my life and to **Act** in keeping with His will for my life.

Our working out our salvation is not only personal but corporate work too: *“do everything without complaining or arguing.”* These must be avoided at all costs in the truly Christian person’s life because they are illustrative of no faith in what God has in mind to do. They reflect the exact opposite of the attitude or mindset of Jesus!

I. Where We are to Work Out our Salvation:

Please also notice with me that I am called to work out my salvation right in the midst of my work-a-day world, amidst people I know and have the opportunity to impact when I choose to live according to His good purposes. This is what Paul means when he tells the Philippian believers their calling is to live their lives in the midst of a **Crooked and Depraved generation.** *“So that you may become pure and blameless children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation.”*

We show others that we are the children of God when we demonstrate our ability to get along with each other collectively as a church even though we may disagree on a few things. **Working out our salvation is very much a corporate exercise** for in every tough place Christ is giving us an opportunity to display His love to others who do not yet know Him!

Now this week as we pick up where we left off, we see that we are to *“continue to work out your salvation.”* Our conduct is to be an exhibition of corporate salvation in the midst of our society, as Paul exhorted the Philippians to do in theirs:

Paul’s picture of his world he paints for us with these two words, *“crooked and depraved,”* have pinpoint definitions when we analyze the Greek words. Crooked means “being bent away from the true form intended,” and depraved is defined “unable to know the right any more.” And, frankly, one needs only to read Romans 1 to get a clear picture of how bent to wickedness, marred by sin they really were. Paul’s world was in reality a sin-sick world!

Paul says “folks your world is dark and it needs light,” it is presently an expression of the darkness because the Prince of Darkness, the Devil, dominates it. The light of the world is Jesus. As a church our calling is to **Live** and **Demonstrate** the truth that we value the total opposite of the world system. Live as children of Christ’s Kingdom lifestyle in the midst of your crooked and depraved world. Show your world the light of Christ with skin on by getting along with each other in His love!

Romans 12:1, 2 *“Offer your bodies as living sacrifices. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good pleasing and perfect will.”*

II. Holding Out the Word:

Verses 15b, 16 *“shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the Word of life – in order that I may boast in the day of Christ that I did not labor for nothing.”*

The first thing Paul would have us to understand is that people cannot truly live until they find life through the Word of God, and that is the Word you and I have been entrusted with beloved brothers and sisters.

Romans 10:17 *“Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message and hearing the message through the Word of Christ.”*

John 6:63 Jesus added, *“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”*

James adds 1:18 *“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created.”*

The point of all three of these Scriptures is to show us spiritual life comes only by receiving the Word of God into our lives, and beloved it is tough to receive something no one is holding out. Paul says: “shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the Word of life. The question then comes how do I hold out the Word of life? The literal rendering is “as you are ones constantly exhibiting, displaying, holding out for all to see” the Word of life. How do I do that?

FIRST by being a **Hearer** of the Word of God. I must be one who digs it out in my private times, who comes to God's house and hears the Word, and who reads good literature about the Word. One must know the Word in order to be able to act in keeping with God's revealed heart ...but hearing in itself is not enough...

SECOND by being a **Doer** of the Word of God. We exhibit the Word of God and its power to order a life when our lives are living epistles of Jesus' words.

James 1:25 says *"The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does."*

The Lord Jesus himself is a living illustration that speaking and doing the Word of God is the way to hold it out, display it, constantly exhibit it to this dark world, and this is what Paul urged the Philippians and you and me to do. Preaching and teaching have little value until they are backed up with conduct...then they become credible.

Paul says know and live the Word as responsible disciples, children of God because on judgment day, before Christ is when I will glory. **And my passion is to stand before my Jesus and be known as a Discipled, a Trainer of others, a man who lived as a reproducer for Jesus Christ.**

He tells them he was ready to be poured out for them as a drink offering! In other words, I am ready to die for you if it means your lives will be representative; exhibiting constantly the word of life to your dark world! Paul was a smart man; he knew the time to talk is after the victory not before.

Beloved brothers and sisters, it seems to me, we all ought to be totally committed by the same passion. That on the day of Christ we will be known as reproducers of disciples, who held out, continued to exhibit and display the Word of life to those in our spheres of influence!

III. Two Examples of Stars

Verses 19 – 30

As a further demonstration of the upside-down values system and world view Jesus brings to us, Paul gives us two examples of Christian Stars, lights for Christ as he closes chapter 2: As you think about what kind of men these two guys were keep in mind the definition which our world uses for what a star is: A person society looks up to as a star has lavish wardrobe and homes, a reputation for being sexually indiscriminate, has been married too many times, acts in movies, or perhaps runs with a football, or basketball; this is our societal conception of a star.

Paul says look at Timothy and see his life Philippians; here is a Christian light, a man of God, a man of faith, and deep Christian love. Paul's own son in the faith of whom his spiritual dad says *"I have no one else like him"* he is one-of-a-kind. Listen to what Paul says about this godly young man! He genuinely, *"takes an interest in you!"*

It is a mark of **True Spirituality** in a man or woman when that person not only has his own spiritual passion to know and walk with Jesus Christ through life, to live a life of spiritual vitality and integrity, in his or her own mind and heart, but then also genuinely cares about the spiritual welfare of others' spiritual lives too!

Paul lifts up Timothy as an example of what it means to live the Christian life. Paul says “there is no self-seeking or selfish ambition in him because each one of your souls are very precious to him.” Timothy cares very deeply about your spiritual welfare in Christ. No wonder Paul said verse 19, *“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon.”*

Paul knows he cannot come to see the Philippians in person but he believes they will benefit from a visit from his son in the faith Timothy. He pays the young man a wonderful compliment when he says I know I can send him to you and he will be faithful to the message of the Gospel of Christ Jesus!

Paul writes that Timothy *“has proven himself,”* to be a man of God. The literal rendering is: “the proving by trial of him or he has the disposition of one who having been tried by fire is found proven to be good, genuine, that he is on the inside what he says he is in his conversations and in the way he lives his life, when no one else can see him!

Timothy had been with Paul through some pretty tough things, like stoning in his home town of Lystra, beatings and death threats in Macedonia, yet here he was; a faithful man of God all those years later, having pastored the difficult church at Ephesus Turkey.

It is another clear mark of real stars for Christ, true spirituality, in a person is when he or she has walked in and through the difficult place which maybe buckled his knees but is proven faithful man of God through it all. Paul writes that Timothy has proven his character time and time again as a *“slave for the gospel!”*

Timothy has worked as a bond slave, sold himself out for the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no get rich for Jesus stuff here in this young man’s heart and soul. He has chosen to be Christ’s slave, to give the Lord Jesus his utter and unquestioning obedience that the gospel may be held out, demonstrated to others! This is another mark of stars in the church, the truly spiritual, they see themselves as bond slaves for Christ; they see themselves as servants of the gospel. And finally, Paul says if you want to see what a star in the church is like, look at your own messenger you sent, **Epaphroditus** who came to take care of me as a service for Christ for your church: My fellow-worker, my associate in the work, my fellow-soldier, warrior of the faith, and He is worthy of honor; why? He **Risked his Life for the Gospel** of Christ to meet needs in Christ’s man Paul.

The Philippian church saw Paul had need of a man to come and care for him and serve as a personal attendant so they sent the young man of God Epaphroditus to Paul. He was obviously a very courageous young man because if you are the attendant of a man who is on death row, you have opened yourself up to being identified with that man’s criminal behaviors! Yet, Epaphroditus went to Paul anyway!

Here is why he went: He saw serving his church in meeting another’s needs as an act of worship, not just one hour in the sanctuary on Sunday morning, but an everyday lifestyle; from the Greek word leitourgos – poured out in serving love. His own life he did not count so dear that it couldn’t be risked for the gospel, staking his life on the truth and laying himself on the line, the words literally rendered are: “a toss up, a throwing of the dice.”

The question of heroism is asking and answering is pretty simple: When I give myself to this cause or this person, is that person or cause worthy of my selfless service, to lay my life down for it or them? If it is worthy of my service, am I prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the person or

the cause? Epaphroditus saw the Gospel of Jesus Christ as something he was ready to die for. And frankly, all over the world there are Christians who are asking and answering that question daily. Are we here at Cedar Grove this morning, that sold out to the cause of the Gospel?

Therefore, God had mercy on them all and healed him; literally Paul says, “*such a one as him is having honor, dearness, esteem, or preciousness.*” Paul is making it easy for Epaphroditus to go back home to Philippi. He is telling them about the heroic actions their young man of God had done in Rome as he sends him back to them.

Paul says I know what your dark world around you thinks a star is but these two men are stars in the church, truly spiritual men of God, **who are openly Demonstrating and Exhibiting the Word of God, these two men have come to understand and live God’s Word!**

Applications to My Life:

Child of God, with intimate fellowship with your Lord Jesus on a daily basis, I plead with you: Shine like a star in this dark society, serve as a guide for the souls of people ... Hold out, demonstrate the active power of the Word of God to change a life by being a hearer and doer of the Word!

Worship the Lord with a lifestyle of faithfulness and caring for other people. Understand that when you give another person a cup of cold water in Jesus’ name you have given it to Him...this is a star in the church. If you are here this morning without having come alive to Christ Jesus in your spiritual being . . .

May 1, 2022

“THE COMMUNITY OF JOY:
11. “Young Messengers of Grace!”
Philippians 2:19 – 30

Introduction:

We are in a study of the letter of Philippians, under the general theme: The Community of Joy, no matter what circumstances we face. Philippians 2 is a call to **U**_____ and to embrace the **A**_____ of Jesus.

We must be personal partakers of the **K**_____ of the **H**_____ that is on the foundation of what Jesus Christ has done to redeem us!

In the Bible the heart is the **S**_____ of our **A**_____, the place where our desires live and from which we make decisions in life. There is an equation of sorts in Jesus’ teaching: Transformed **D**_____ equals kingdom **L**_____! Matthew 12:33 – 35

Paul is in his second imprisonment, in a dungeon from which he knows he will not come out alive. He has lots of rivals who wish him ill, some of whom are preachers.

Paul is pleading with the believers then and now to walk together in **U**_____ because we all have the **S**_____ **M**_____!

Paul seizes on the conflict issues to give us one of his greatest teachings on the incarnation, death on the Cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

The context of chapter two is unity and oneness, the mindset of Jesus, verse 5; what is that mindset? John 6:38; Hebrews 5:8; Hebrews 10:7

Paul's heartcry for Philippi and my desire for us at Cedar Grove is that we will be so I with Jesus we share His mindset together!

The primary function of the Holy Spirit is to make the mindset of Jesus alive in you and me: To P the very I of Jesus in us all!

The Lord's transforming power in us makes it possible for us to both D His will for my life and to A in keeping with His will.

I. Where We are to Work Out our Salvation: Philippians 2:14, 15

Notice with me where we are called to work out our salvation: Live your lives in a C and T generation of people!

Working out our salvation is very much a corporate exercise! It is something we are called to do together! The Greek words for crooked and twisted ...

Jesus is the L of the W! Our calling as a church is to L and D the truth that is the exact opposite of the values of our culture! Romans 12:1, 2

II. Holding Out the Word of God: Philippians 2:15, 16

People cannot find true life until they find it in accordance with the Word of God. That is what we are called to H O to them. Romans 10:17; John 6:63; James 1:18

True spiritual life comes to a life when the Word of the Lord is heard and received in that heart and life. That is our calling.

We must be H of the Word of God and D of the Word of God as well! James 1:25

The cry of my heart is to do everything I can do to be a D and T of others! That was Paul's motivation before the Lord!

III. Two Examples of Stars: Philippians 2:19 – 30

Paul gives us two examples of stars, people who lived in the Light of Jesus!

Paul tells the believers to look at the life of T a man who bore the marks of T S. He cared about his own journey and the spiritual lives of others too!

Paul knows he can't come to Philippi so he decided to send Timothy whom he says has proven himself as a slave of the Gospel!

Paul says look to your own messenger E a young man of God who has R his L for the Gospel.

Paul commended him as a courageous young man of God, who went to minister to Paul on "Death Row" in the Mamertine because he saw meeting Paul's needs as an act of W his word is leitorgos ...

Paul says honor and esteem men like Epaphroditus because of his heroic actions in his life of walking with Jesus.

These two young men are openly D, holding out the Word of God!

Concluding Thoughts:

Discussion Starter Questions for Home Groups

1. Does the fact that Paul wrote Philippians in “The Mamertine,” yet wrote about having a heart full of joy, speak truth to your heart?
2. Why do you think it is important for us all to be seekers of His heart, will, and desires so we are walking in unity as a Church?
3. Can you identify ways the Holy Spirit has been pressing the image of Jesus into your heart and life lately?
4. Do you see evidences in the people who are secular in our culture, living as if their value system is crooked and twisted away from the will and ways of God? What are they?
5. What are the important principles we must understand if we are going to hold out the Word of life to others?
6. What are some things about Timothy’s life that touch your heart?
7. What are some things about Epaphroditus’ life that touch your heart?
8. Read together aloud the story in Matthew 5:13 – 16 and discuss what Jesus told us believers are in our essential nature.
9. Read together aloud Galatians 5:16 – 26 and discuss ways the Holy Spirit reveals His working in our lives in the text Paul wrote.
10. Are there people in your life for whom you bear a burden to influence them to desire to be a disciple of Jesus? What are you doing to help them understand who Jesus is and what He came to do for us all? Share thoughts and prayer with your HOME group members.