

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Growing up in Southern California, back in the time before Smartphones and Ipads, one of the things that I developed as a routine was to always pick up the daily newspaper and read it while I was having my breakfast.

I would first read the sports section, after all, I had to know how my favorite teams did – and once in a while after I was finished with the sports section, I would grab the comics sections.

Those were the only two section in the paper I would read, the rest went in the trash.

In the comics, I would always read Dilbert for a little office humor and I would read the classic Peanuts by Charles Shultz.

Those were my favorite, the interaction between Dilbert and the rest of the office guys and then you had Charlie Brown, Linus, Lucy and Snoopy and their interactions.

I think the reason I enjoyed them so much was because there was always a sense of truth to what they were saying.

They were relatable.

For example, look at the following cartoon, it is an interaction between Linus and Lucy...(Show Slide)

Read the strip,

Linus' respond at the end, "I love mankind... it's people I can't stand"

It's people I can't stand...

Now, what makes us chuckle is that Linus is not alone in his thoughts.

Think about other professions, ask a waiter, "What's the thing that he or she hates the most about his or her job and most likely, they will say, the people."

Nurses, the people

Teachers, the people

Ask a pastor, "What's the hardest part about ministry?" And there response is the same thing – it is not necessarily the long hour studying or standing in front of the pulpit, it is the people.

However, there is a problem because without people, there is no ministry...

These same people are the same ones we are called to serve.

A doctor can't do his job unless they interact with their patient and the same goes for the other professions.

You see people can be hurtful, they can be prideful, they can be spiteful, and they can be careless, thoughtless and heartless.

I think I had mentioned to you a few weeks back about a lady that would attend bible study with us down at the Starbucks and she was strong in her stand that she would never set foot inside another church because she couldn't stand the people.

So the question this morning is, knowing what people are capable of, how do we **not** allow our interactions with people to demoralize or hinder what God has called us to do?

And this is very important because if we don't know how to deal with it, it tends to make us bitter.

How do we **not** allow these interactions to rob us of our joy? Which is Jesus Christ.

This is what Apostle Paul is going to demonstrate to the church in Philippi as well as us this morning.

Let's pray...

So over the past five weeks, we covered chapter one in this amazing letter to the church in Philippi.

I had made the point last week that the shift in the letter changes from Paul writing about his hardships to Paul exhorting the church regarding their conduct.

[Phi 2:1-11 NKJV] 1 Therefore if [there is] any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind. 3 [Let] nothing [be done] through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, [and] coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to [the point of] death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and

given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Chapter 2 begins with a “therefore” it’s a continuation to the point that Paul was writing at the end of Chapter one.

[Phi 1:27 NKJV] 27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

The biggest threat to the church in Philippi or to any church at any time has been one of disunity.

Disunity is something we expect from the world –

This is the reason for wars, conflicts, genocide.

But from the church...

We are called to stand fast in one spirit and in one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

But, even in the early church we had disunity-

- Peter and Paul were at opposite sides of the argument whether circumcision was a requirement.
- Paul and Barnabas were at odds in the book of Acts regarding whether or not to take John Mark with them in their ministry and this led to them going their own separate ways.
- The twelve disciples argued amongst themselves about which one of them was going to be greater. We see this throughout the gospels.

So why is unity so important in the church???

You see,

Unity is not the pursuit of being the same. We are not called to dress alike or have the same hair styles.

Biblical unity is pursuing the same person and the same truth.

Unity is not looking the same, but looking at the same God.

Unity is different people pursuing Christ together.

Unity is unique people following God's Word as written.

Unity is having different roles, yet pursuing oneness. God has given each of us different spiritual gifts to bring glory to Him.

Why must genuine believers work at unity and love unity?

Because unity is a part of God's perfect, vast, Triune nature. There is unity in the Godhead. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are in perfect unity—even though they're three different persons, they are one God.

They don't argue over who is going to do what – everything is done in perfect harmony.

And let us not forget that we are made in His image.

We must understand that whenever there's disunity, we dishonor God's character. Whenever there is disunity, we malign God's person.

When we allow disunity, we distort a proper understanding of the God who is three but one.

When we stop making unity a passionate priority, we stop bringing glory to God.

Turn with me to the gospel of John 17,

[Jhn 17:11, 21-23 NKJV] 11 "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be **one as We [are]**. ...

21 "that they all may be **one**, as You, Father, [are] in Me, and I in You; that they also may be **one** in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be **one just as We are one**: 23 "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made **perfect in one**, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

We are commanded to be one. To have unity.

Here is the thing church...

There can only be unity in the church when there is humility in the church.

Humility is the key to unity in the church. That is what Paul is telling us here in our study today and if we are true believers,

God has given us the resources to be able to have unity within the church.

Remember, God never calls us to do anything unless He has given us the ability to do it.

[Eph 1:3 NKJV] 3 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ,

[2Pe 1:3 NKJV] 3 as His divine power has given to us all things that [pertain] to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Pall is calling on the church to respond to what Christ has done for you. He has given to us every spiritual blessing and all things.

Response is a sign of life—no response to what God has given to us means death.

We need to react to what God has given to us. Our reaction alone will prove we are in Christ and this reaction will create unity.

Not only do we need to respond to God's encouragement but also His love. The love of Christ should compel us to unity as well. Knowing that He loved us while we were still sinners and that His love is what sustains us as we go through the difficult times in our lives.

It is His love which compels us to love others in unity, **yes - even the difficult people.**

And you would be surprised what prevents church goers from loving one another and promoting disunity.

- I can't stand the way that person smells.
- I can't believe the way they are dressed.

In the early 70's Pastor Church Smith had people complaining about the hippies coming into the sanctuary with their dirty feet and staining the carpets. They wanted Pastor Chuck to do something about and he did, he ordered his staff to pull the carpets out. Problem solved.

- You have other people that say, "Well, I can't love that person because I know what he or she did 20 years ago and I can't forgive them." **Well guess what? Jesus Christ did – the same way He forgave you.**

The third principle that Paul brings up in verse one is the fellowship of the Spirit in verse 1.

The Holy Spirit is the unifying principle in the local church.

The Spirit alone brings order out of chaos and preserves harmony in the body of Christ. True partnership of the Spirit results in unity.

When the church is in one accord with the Spirit, there will be unity.

Acts 2

[Act 2:1, 46-47 NKJV] 1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ... **46** So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, **47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

So we see that we are called to unity – Now Paul tells us to guard ourselves against the opposite of unity and that is selfishness.

[Phi 2:3 NKJV] 3 [Let] nothing [be done] through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Selfish ambition and conceit can be summed up with one word – pride.

And pride is really the root of disunity.

I want to do things my way instead of God's way.

I want to get the glory instead of God.

I know people that get mad at a church because they feel that they were never really recognized for their service within the church.

This is disunity –

This is selfish ambition –

I want you to apply this following verse as a life verse.

[Col 3:23-24 NKJV] 23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

I love this verse because not only does it apply to our service within the church but in everything we do.

When we have to deal with difficult people, all we have to remember is that we are doing it unto the Lord.

We can all say the following....

I hate my job, my boss is a jerk –

I have two options, to be miserable and let it consume me and have my job performance suffer or I can do the exact opposite, do it unto the Lord, which means I am going to show up Monday morning and give it my 100%.

Because, no longer am I doing it to please my jerk of a boss but I am doing it to give glory to God.

This is how we as believers deal with difficult people. Do it unto the Lord.

Now in order to accomplish this we need humility and humility is something that goes against our very nature.

The world says to strive for power and for prestige.

When we think of the word humility, we think of the opposite, we think of weakness.

[Eph 4:1-2 NKJV] 1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all **lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,**

[Mat 5:5 NKJV] 5 Blessed [are] the **meek, For they shall inherit the earth.**

Jesus didn't say blessed are the strong and powerful – you see, striving for power and prestige is not the path to blessedness. Meekness is. Humility is.

Many of us believe that humility simply is thinking less of ourselves.

“I consider myself humble because I only think about myself 50% of the time now as opposed to 80% of the time.”

Humility is thinking of yourself 0% of the time.

Remember, this is what Paul has been demonstrating this entire letter.

Despite his imprisonment, despite his beatings and people talking bad about him, his concern is the wellbeing of the church.

He wants to make sure that they don't fall into that deception of trying to make a name for themselves instead of lifting up the King of Kings.

Jesus Christ demonstrated this to His disciples as they were too busy trying to figure out whom among them was going to be number two in the kingdom of God, Jesus proceeded to wash their feet.

Remember, they didn't have paved roads back then they didn't have nice sidewalks and door mats.

They wore sandals on dirt roads and many times human and animal waste littered the streets.

Jesus was doing the work of the lowliest of servants.

The disciples must have been stunned at this act of humility and condescension, that Christ, their Lord and master, should wash the feet of His disciples, when it was their proper work to have washed His.

But when Jesus came to earth the first time, He came not as King and Conqueror, but as the suffering Servant that we find in Isaiah 53.

You see, He came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The humility expressed by His act with towel and basin foreshadowed His ultimate act of humility and love on the cross for each and every one of us.

Listen to the words that Jesus spoke after He washed the disciples' feet.

Turn with me to John 13.

[Jhn 13:14-17 NKJV] 14 "If I then, [your] Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.

16 "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his

master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. **17 "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.**

Now before you start taking your shoes off, let's look at another example of humility.

John the Baptist – turn with me to John 3.

[Jhn 3:22-30 NKJV] 22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.

23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. 24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison. 25 Then there arose a dispute

between [some] of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. 26

And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified--behold, He is

baptizing, and all are coming to Him!" 27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

28 "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,'

but, 'I have been sent before Him.' 29 "He who has the bride is the

bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears

him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. **30 "He must increase, but I [must] decrease.**

He must increase, but I must decrease,

What a powerful statement by John the Baptist.

He was chosen by God as the one who was going to be the messenger, he had a group of people that were following him around as he baptized people.

Yet, John the Baptist was never bitter or resentful.

John the Baptist understood it was good for him to become less visible and known, for Jesus to become more visible and known.

In even larger aspects, this should be the motto of every Christian, especially leaders among God's people. Jesus should become greater and more visible, and the servant should become less and less visible.

This is the definition of humility.

In verse four, Paul tells the church that we should be looking out for each other and not focused on our own needs.

This is why I want you to get into the habit of praying for one another and sharing your burdens with one another.

We can all use prayer, there is no one here that can sincerely say – I honestly don't need prayer today.

Paul then proceed to give us the example of the ultimate humility that Christ demonstrated by becoming man.

[Phi 2:5-8 NKJV] 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, [and] coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to [the point of] death, even the death of the cross.

One of the things that we have to always remember about when Christ became flesh is that He was still God.

He wasn't 50% man and 50% God, it was 100% man and 100% God. How does that work? We don't know.

When God sits enthroned in heaven's glory, there is no one He obeys.

Jesus had to leave heaven's glory and be found in appearance as a man in order to become obedient.

This is where He demonstrates His humility through His obedience to the will of the Father. That is why it states that He took the form of a bondservant because as a bondservant, you no longer have a will. Your will is your master's will.

His entire life was one of humility, from birth until death.

Jesus demonstrated His humility through the conditions in which He was born, in a cave, to poor parents, He was a carpenter by trade, and his disciples were fishermen and tax collectors. He humbled Himself by those that He served.

He humbled Himself by allowing Satan to tempt Him in the wilderness and having to endure hunger, thirst and tiredness.

He humbled Himself by allowing the shame, mocking and public humiliation of his death.

He humbled Himself by enduring the spiritual agony of His suffering on the cross.

Crucifixion was such a shameful death that it was not permitted for Roman citizens – even amongst the Jews, it was viewed as a curse from God.

This is the example that Jesus Christ gave us in humility.

Because of His humility and obedience His name is above all names. Jesus Christ didn't proclaim this Himself, it was God the Father who did this.

[Phi 2:9-11 NKJV] 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The big question for us is whether we are going to do this now or later.

So how do we learn to love people – even the difficult people?

By following the perfect example that Jesus Christ provided. In humility.

And in humility, we serve one another and pursue Christ in unity. Amen!

Let's pray...

Dear Jesus,

Please forgive me of all of my sins.

I know that my sin has separated me from You and I am deserving of death.

I believe that you died for my sins and rose again.

I turn from my sins and I am asking that You come into my life.

Show me how to live my life that is right and pleasing to You.

I accept You as my Lord and Savior.

In Jesus name I pray.