



## ***Make My Joy Complete***

- I. Introduction. Many scholars treat Philippians 1 as the introduction and chapter 2 as the beginning of the body of Paul's letter. It is certainly true that Paul shows pastoral care and concern in chapter 1, but his tone changes dramatically in chapter 2 when he reveals his primary reason for writing the letter. In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul addresses the dissension in the church in a powerful literary format.
- II. Paul's Appeal for Harmony
  - A. Four rhetorical remarks- 2:1. Some versions of the Bible phrase these four remarks as questions. Whether they are questions or comments is unclear, but they are all rhetorical with a clear purpose. Paul wants to get the attention of his readers. Repetition in the Greek language was the primary way to communicate emphasis. For Paul to repeat a phrase four times with a little different phrasing each time would be similar to us using four exclamation marks in English. His words carry great power!
    1. If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ. In 1:27, Paul tells them to live a life worthy of the gospel. He is now going to apply that principle. We might rephrase this comment- "If you enjoy being saved by the sacrifice of Jesus..."
    2. If any comfort from his love. Look how much Jesus loves you and what he was willing to sacrifice for you. Do you get comfort from that?
    3. If any fellowship with the Spirit. Through Christ, you receive the presence of God to live in you and guide you. Do you enjoy that benefit of salvation?
    4. If any tenderness and compassion. Has Christ's presence in your life given you a heart of tenderness and compassion toward others? Is your faith real? Are you living a life worthy of the gospel?
  - B. One command- 2:2. If the answer is yes to the four previous statements, then make my joy complete. This is a classic if/then statement. If you are committed, compassionate believers of Jesus living with the love of Christ and housing the Holy Spirit, then make my joy complete... Philippians is a letter about joy. Paul never says the Philippians have joy; he tells them to get some. Paul appeals to their faith and commitment to Christ in order to get them to do something very difficult that will bring him great joy (make my joy complete). Quit being selfish and get along with each other!
  - C. How to make Paul's joy complete:
    1. Practice harmony- 2:2. Paul uses the same literary tool to emphasize the importance of what he is communicating. He uses three similar phrases to strongly emphasize how important is his message to the Philippian Christians.

- a. Being like-minded- relationally not intellectually. Think about a marriage. A husband and wife are like-minded in that both are doing what it takes to make the marriage work. This doesn't mean they intellectually agree on every issue. Disagree; just don't be disagreeable.
  - b. Having the same love- growing in love is one of the themes of the letter (1:9). Paul wants the Philippian believers to grow up in their ability to love like Christ. They need to grow in love for each other by doing what is in the best interest of others.
  - c. Being one in spirit and purpose- This is very similar to being like- minded. Be unified in your mission and purpose as the body of Christ. You are all believers in Jesus your leader. Follow him and keep his mission as your unifying rally cry. Keep the main thing the main thing.
2. Practice humility- 2:3-4. For the third time in four verses, Paul uses this exact same literary device to communicate the importance of his message. He makes three similar statements to drive home the primary message of the Philippian letter. These following statements are the core of the teaching about living out faith and unity in the Church.
- a. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit- Paul uses the same phrase here as in 1:17. Don't be like those preachers who preach out of selfish ambition and who gossip and cause strife. Don't be smug (vain conceit) and selfish when you are in conflict with others. Watch your language!
  - b. In humility consider others better than yourself- Be humble when you are in conflict. Get rid of your selfish pride and try to see issues from the other person's perspective. "Better than yourself" means "ahead of yourself." Look to others interests before you look to your own interests.
  - c. Look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. All people will naturally look to their own interests. In conflict, love others enough to look after their interests as well as your own.

### III. Applying the Text

- A. Philippians 2:1-4 in cultural vernacular- "YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN!!!! So make me proud by GETTING ALONG WITH EACH OTHER!!! You do this by BEING HUMBLE and PUTTING OTHERS AHEAD OF YOURSELF!!!"
- B. Why is unity important in Christian relationships? What is the impact on the Church when Christians don't get along? How do you protect harmony in your relationships? What principles did you learn from this text about protecting unity with others? How do we disagree without becoming disagreeable?
- C. Why is humility the key to relational unity? How do we develop relational humility? What do you think is the key to staying humble? What are some things you do to keep from being selfish in your relationships? What is your takeaway from this study?

