

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Paul's Christmas Spirit

Philippians 2:1-11

Keywords: Humility, Kenosis, unity, helpfulness, Christmas

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

Sermon Audio Blurb: With so many contending messages attached to Christmas today it is important for each Christian to stop and consider what attitudes and "spirit" is to be theirs. In Philippians 2 there is a clear description of how each believer is to be toward one another and it is all because of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Dismiss

I. Introduction.

- A. Read passage.
- B. This church in Philippi was a good, solid church.
 - 1. There was much for which to be praised.
 - 2. They were involved in the gospel. Witnessing to those around them. Helping in the mission work.
 - 3. They showed a sincere love for the Apostle Paul. Deeply concerned that he was in prison because of the message of Jesus Christ.
 - 4. Paul has just told them in 1:29, that it was destined for them to also suffer in the same way that he has been suffering.
 - 5. Therefore he desires to prepare them for that time.
- C. The church was like any church, there were weaknesses as well.
 - 1. It appears that though they were given to the gospel message, there was disunion within the church.
 - 2. Paul is challenging them in the later chapters to care for one another, not to be given to complaining and grumbling.
 - 3. He warned them of bad and false teaching.

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4. In other words, to prepare them for the coming sufferings, he is focusing their attention at home.
- D. Well during this Christmas season we hear much about the spirit of Christmas.
1. Of course there is no real concept of what that spirit means. But it sounds good.
 2. We think of it as a time of giving, of good cheer. It is a time of peace and goodwill toward man.
 3. But the real attitude, or spirit, for the believer is a truly Christian attitude.
 - a. In fact, it is an attitude that the non-Christian world cannot produce.
 - b. It can't be described in a single word or command. Instead, Paul gives us the fulness of this attitude by giving three commands that are intricately interwoven with each other.
 - c. You can't refuse to do one of them without destroying the other two. They are that closely linked.
- E. And we can see that spirit in this passage, Paul gives us the Christmas spirit for the church. And he gives us the reasons for that spirit.
- F. Now to prepare their minds to discuss these things, Paul gives them a series of "ifs." (1) These are appeals that he is making to them that are designed to have them remember certain important truths that can be easily forgotten over time.
1. These 'ifs' do not mean 'maybe.'
 - a. Rather, they are a way of writing that is designed to bring you into a proper way of thinking.
 - b. You can add in your mind as you read these 'ifs' words to the effect, "and there is."
 - c. He is not speaking in abstracts here, he is speaking into their shared experiences as Christians. These are qualities that everyone who truly trusts in Jesus Christ experience.
 2. He starts with "encouragement in Christ."
 - a. The point he is making is that as believers there is a point of common ground on which we can come together and give encouragement, exhortations, urgings to one another.

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- b. It is like Hebrews 10 where believers commanded to regularly coming together for worship. The reason is that during that time of worship they are to be stimulating one another to love and good deeds.
 - c. When a person comes by faith to Jesus Christ, that event places him under certain obligations or responsibilities. A key one is that he is to place himself in submission to the teachings of Christ and the Apostles.
 - d. The Christian is most best known by his love for Christ. Christ is the common ground for all Christians. And He is the one you can appeal to when making your point. He is the eternal, living Word and He speaks through His written Word.
3. He then moves to “consolation of love.”
- a. He reminds them again of the way that love gives comfort and consolation. There is a tenderness to love that takes the ragged edge off of words and actions.
 - b. This begins with our experience with the love of God which took a sinner and forgave that sinner and declared him to now be a child of God.
 - c. That love that continues to be seen in his grace even as we stumble and struggle.
 - d. And this is something that believers are to practice toward one another. A tenderness toward each other that is born out of our shared experience of God’s consoling love.
4. The third is “fellowship of the Spirit.”
- a. This speaks of the relationship that is naturally present in all true Christians.
 - b. It is the Spirit who baptizes each person into the Body of Christ, which is the church.
 - c. The Christian has been born of the Spirit, placed into the body of Christ, and renewed and strengthened by the Spirit.
 - d. It is to this basic, vital life connection that Paul is talking about.

G. Recap.

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1. Is not Jesus Christ the source of all your hope? (Yes)
 2. Is there not a level of joy and peace and encouragement that only other believers can give? (Yes)
 3. Hasn't the Holy Spirit given you a relationship with other believers and with God Himself that is deeper than with those who are not saved? (Yes)
- H. WELL, if these are true, then how are they to affect how Christians are to think, especially during this Christmas season?
1. Three directives, three commands for the one who says he is a Christian.

II. The Christmas Attitude.

- A. Three commands.
1. Oneness.
 - a. Notice how Paul gives this a fulness. It is not just a unity of purpose, or emotion, or of doctrine and truth.
 - b. It is all of those things and more.
 - c. He is destroying with this, the foolish, and sinful, thought that we are individuals who don't need to consider carefully the rest of the Body of Christ.
 - d. Their minds, and our minds, need to be focused on the same things.
 - (1) And I am going to say that the primary thing that needs to be focused on is Jesus Christ.
 - (2) That will be more obvious in a short bit.
 - e. But the point here is simple. How can you be in Christ, enjoying the benefits of Christian love, and have the same Holy Spirit dwelling within you, and not be driven to be of one mind?
 - f. There needs to be a mutual love among us. If the bible says that the Spirit naturally produces love within the Christian, then it is heresy to think that you can not love another who is in Christ.
 - g. There needs to be a unity of soul.

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- (1) Apparently there was disunity in the church there.
 - (2) We know that two women were not getting along. In fact, it was so obvious that Paul actually had to name them—talk about embarrassing.
 - (3) And if they were like any church, people were choosing sides.
 - (4) And Paul would have nothing to do with that attitude.
- h. To come to unity of this type requires that you be a student of Jesus Christ.
- (1) John 17:21, “that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.”
 - (2) You see that? Jesus said that in unity the world sees God! They see better who Jesus Christ is.
 - (3) Unity, it is not an option, and it is desired when you desire Christ.
2. Humility.
- a. How much can a Christian do from a selfish attitude or motivation? (Do nothing...)
 - (1) If that is true, then if we do it from a selfish motive, what is it? (Sin)
 - b. We also can't be motivated by how something will make us feel or look.
 - (1) That is conceit.
 - (2) It is a mind set that says, “I won't do that...what would people think?” Or, “I won't go seek forgiveness, let them come to me!”
 - (3) If you have checked the presents under the tree and duly noted with quiet irritation that you did not get as many as you thought, then you are guilty here.

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- (4) We in America need to give this a lot of thought. Why we where the clothes we do. Why we do our hair the way we do. Why we want a certain kind of job. So much is motivated by our self, and that is condemned here.
 - (5) “Do nothing....”
 - c. He gives us the opposite as well. How do we set aside that selfish mind set? By actively pursuing the interests of others.
 - (1) This requires a serious change of heart.
 - (2) It requires a fundamental change of motivation.
 - (3) Because that will hurt. It will mean you don’t get noticed. It means that things that ought to go your way, won’t. Your agenda is secondary.
 - (4) Yet how many have left churches because their agenda was not met? How many have broken relationships with genuine believers because they didn’t get their way?
 - d. And again, I tell you the truth. This will not happen until you first think long and deep about Jesus Christ.
3. Helpfulness.
- a. Here he says to broaden our minds and hearts.
 - b. We need to include the rest of the brethren. Our decision-making, when it is not done with the rest of the church body in mind, is sinful.
 - c. How many pastors have left a church simply because of their interests? And before you nod, how many members of churches have left merely because of their interests?
 - d. You see, when you put these words into the life of our church, there is much to be considered. God has done good things here. Lives are being strengthened. Sin is being put away. But the work is by no means finished.
 - (1) Paul is not just saying these things to the church at Philippi.

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(2) He is saying these words to you.

4. These attitudes will not come about until we have looked long and hard at the doctrine of sin and the beautiful truth of the grace of God.

With great reluctance we give up our flattering opinions of ourselves. We find it difficult to discard of the notion of our own inherent merit. It is hard to drag man away from the rock of self-justification. He is glued so fast to the great stone of self-conceit, which lies close by the gates of hell, that a stronger than Hercules is needed to tear him from it; and even such a deliverer must rip him from it, leaving the skin behind.

From the gate of the City of Destruction up to the pearl gate of the New Jerusalem, it is all grace. The road to glory is paved with stones of grace. The chariot in which we ride to heaven is all of grace. The strength that draws it, and the axle that bears it up, is all of grace and grace alone.

In the whole covenant of grace, from the first letter of the charter down to its last word, there is nothing at all of merit or man's goodness, but it is grace, grace, grace! Oh, how this casts mire into the face of human self-sufficiency! O for a gospel that reveals the sinner as saved by grace from first to last, that God may have all the praise! (Spurgeon)

5. The answer beloved, is to look to Christ. And that is exactly what Paul does.

B. Why these are non-negotiables for Christians.

1. What did Christ say when He called to His disciples? "Follow me."

- a. This was not negotiable.
- b. The Christian is not a person who agrees to certain truths or facts from the bible.
- c. A Christian is first and foremost a person who follows His Lord and savior. That is his life.
- d. In the gospels, one man said to Jesus, I will follow you, just let me first go and bury my father. Jesus looked at him and said, "Let the dead bury their own, you follow me."
- e. Later Jesus said it this way: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **take up his cross, and follow Me**. For whoever wishes to save his life shall **lose it**; but whoever **loses his life for My**

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- sake** shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”
- f. In Matthew 19 a rich young ruler comes to Jesus, wanting to be saved. After some questions Jesus finally said, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”
 - g. Do you hear the voice of Jesus? Are you one of His? The bible says that if you are his, then you hear His voice and you follow Him.
 - h. So Paul is very right in pointing each of us back to Jesus Christ.
2. Christ was one-minded.
- a. He came with a singleness of purpose.
 - b. He came to redeem, save those who were lost in their sins.
 - c. He came to do only the will of his Father in heaven.
 - d. He came to perfectly obey the law.
 - e. He came to perfectly display the glory of His Father.
 - f. You want an good example of one mindedness?
 - (1) “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”
 - (2) “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”
 - (3) “I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one

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who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

(4) “Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done.”

g. If you love the Lord Jesus, then look to Him. He is the example you follow regarding one-mindedness.

3. You want a good example of not looking out for your own interests? Look to Jesus.

a. He existed in the form of God.

(1) ‘morphe.’ This refers to the very essence of his nature. He did not merely “look” like God, He was, and is, God.

(2) Which makes what Paul then tells us all the more powerful.

(3) That little baby, whose birth is celebrated by so many, was God!

(a) Creator.

(b) Sustainer.

(c) Life.

(d) Judge.

b. Yet he did not grab hold of his position and resist. He humbled himself. He emptied himself....of what?

(1) First, his relationship to law.

(a) The law of God was His law! He established it. It was according to His nature. The law was His creation.

(b) Yet He put Himself under the Law. That same law that condemns you and I.

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- (c) He came under the Law's condemnation. The bible says that he became sin on our behalf. He didn't need to do that! But He did if He was not looking out for His own interest only.
 - i) 2 Cor. 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."
 - ii) He did it for us!
- (2) Second, He gave up His riches.
 - (a) Born in a manger to a poor family.
 - (b) Birds have nests, foxes have holes, but the Son of Man has no where to lay His head.
 - i) That is a grievous statement.
 - ii) We won't give up a nights rest, or an extra jacket. He gave up all!
 - iii) The sovereign God, homeless.
 - (c) 2 cor. 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."
 - (d) He borrowed everything.
 - i) His manger.
 - ii) Houses in which to sleep.
 - iii) Boats in which to ride and preach.
 - iv) Bread and fish to divide.
 - v) A donkey to enter Jerusalem.
 - vi) A room for the last supper.
 - vii) Even a tomb to be laid in after His death.

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- (e) But most of all, He took on a debt.
 - i) “Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.”
- (3) He gave up his glory.
 - (a) They did not see the glory of God.
 - (b) They saw a man.
- c. There was only one man ever in the existence of mankind who had the power and authority to truly assert his rights, Jesus Christ. And that man, God in human flesh, gave up that right.
- 4. Christ was humble to the point of dying on a cross for wretched, hateful sinners.
 - a. You want the meaning of Christmas? You want to be blessed beyond measure this Christmas season?
 - b. Then look at the blood-stained brow of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - c. Look at the agony of his cry, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?!”
 - d. Here the words of grace to a filthy criminal who looked at Him and believed.
 - e. Look and wonder at the gentle love He had for His mother (Woman, behold, your son! . . . Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother")
 - f. And listen carefully to the joyous words that were said with triumph and infinite pain...”It is finished.”
 - g. He alone paid the price. He alone removed sin. He alone bore the wrath of God.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Jesus’ name is above all names. He alone is exalted for the glory of the Father.
- B. Rev. 16:7, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.”

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1. Did you hear that. Two things about God's judgments.
 2. "True."
 - a. When he judges, there will be no falsehood, no lies. Just the truth and nothing but the truth.
 - b. We have seen much lying occur in the courts. But this will not be true of God.
 - c. One thing of which you can rest assured is that when you stand before Him, He will deal only with the truth about you and your life.
 - d. But that is not good. Not if your life is not hidden in Christ. There will be no debate, all that is wrong, all that is against God will come to light. No lies, no shuffling, no resistance. Just the truth of a holy God shining upon your life.
 3. "Righteous."
 - a. This simply means that when you stand before God. Mercy will not be even considered a little. NONE!
 - b. When you are before God he will judge only in righteousness. The only thing that will matter is your relationship to God and His holiness.
 - c. The question will be this: Are you pure and without sin? NO? Then you are condemned for all eternity.
 - d. Slam will go the gavel and the judgment will be given.
- C. What is the answer?
1. Do you feel the pain of your sin? Does it weigh down upon you until you realize there is no escape? Do you see yourself as a guilty sinner before and holy God?
 2. (Courtroom scene where the witnesses have come and you are found guilty. Then mercy comes to your side. He points to Jesus and you cry out, "Jesus, will Jesus Save Me?" And He comes and tells the court that your sins have been paid.)