

Paul's Plea For Unity

Philippians 2:1-4

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Beginning in Philippians 2:1, follow with me as I read. Paul says, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any," the King James says, "bowels and mercies," we discover that is tender mercies and compassion, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind," there's the theme, humility of mind, "let each esteem other better," or more important, "than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things," interests or concerns, "but every man also on the things," or interests or concerns, "of others."

What are the things that rob us of our joy? In Philippians 1, we learned that circumstances can rob us of our joy. Have you ever noticed that sometimes your days don't go the way you planned them? You get on the freeway, you don't plan on any traffic, and everybody in California is on the same freeway as you are on that day, or there's a fender-bender, you're delayed, and they don't realize you've gotta get to work, "Please get out of my way!" Or, you run into Starbucks to get a cup of coffee and everybody in line in front of you is slow, and things don't go quite the way you thought they should go? Maybe you live in a house full of people, and you have to share a bathroom, and they don't realize, "I need to use the bathroom. I've gotta get dressed and get going," and you get under each other's skin?

I saw a "Peanuts" cartoon once where it said, "I love humanity, it's people I can't stand." Sometimes I think of that, If I could just be on a desert or tropical island, all by myself and didn't have to deal with people, I would be happy. We realize that's not going to happen, right? We need to learn to have joy in spite of our circumstances and joy in spite of people.

Paul dealt with this in this chapter. As we move into Philippians 2, he goes from Philippians 1, joy in spite of circumstances, which, by the way, is having the single mind, verse 21, go back there with me for just a moment, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," that's the single mind—as long as Christ is glorified, I rejoice. The other joy stealer is people, Philippians 2, joy in spite of people, and the key is in verse 3, having the submissive mind. Notice it in verse 3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind," humility of mind, "let each esteem other better than themselves." The key to having joy in spite of circumstances is the single mindset that whether I live or die, as long as Christ is glorified, I rejoice and the gospel is preached. The single mind is the desire to glorify Christ.

The submissive mind is a mind that forgets self and actually serves the Lord and others, and the result is that we have joy. Someone said it in an acrostic, if you spell joy, J-O-Y, that it spells, Jesus, others, and you—Jesus first, others second, and you last. It's easy sometimes to say, "Well, I don't mind putting Jesus first, but I'm going to put me second." We need to learn that others and their needs come before us. Joy comes from not selfishness, but from selflessness or humility. Philippians 2, is the submissive mind—joy in spite of people.

Paul pleaded for this in verse 2, he said, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind," I want you to get along together, and I want you to do it so that my joy will be full, my joy will be complete. When he uses that phrase, "Fulfil ye my joy," he's actually using a word picture of a cup filled with joy. He says, "You know what's going to fill my cup and fill my joy is if you love one another, you get along with one another, and you serve one another." Paul's pastor heart for the congregation at Philippi was that they love one another.

My heart for Revival Christian Fellowship is that we learn to love one another. Amen? That we do get along, that we do serve each other, that we're not self-centered and divisive, so we need to learn to put others before our own needs.

Paul does two things in this text, I want you to see it, he first gives us the incentive or ground for unity. The whole message tonight is about the need for unity. What's the incentive or the ground for unity? It's in verse 1. Secondly, in verses 2-4, he gives us the directive or the graces that we need in our lives for unity. We have the ground for unity and the graces for unity.

Let's look, first of all, at the incentives or the ground of unity. It's one verse, but it's packed. I need you to follow me closely. Go back to verse 1. Paul says, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any," tender mercies and compassion. Notice that Paul starts with a "therefore." "If there be therefore," so the chapter starts with a hinge taking us back to what has come before, and it takes us back to Philippians 1:27. Look at it with me where Paul says, "...that ye stand fast in one spirit," there's the unity, "with one mind," or soul or heart, "striving together," not against each other, "for the faith of the gospel." In this case in Philippians 1, Paul is encouraging them to work together to face a common enemy, those who are preaching a false gospel and opposing the work of Christ. In Philippians 2, Paul is actually encouraging them to get along with each other, to serve together, to love each other. First, there's an outside enemy, "...striving together for the faith of the gospel," to get the gospel out; and there's an inside problem, we need to work together to serve the Lord in His church.

Notice the phrase "If...any," this is important in this verse, "If there be therefore any consolation...if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies," or tender mercies and compassion. The word "if," and it's used this way in many other Pauline epistles, is what's known as a conditional clause that assumes the reality of the statement. It actually means if or since there is. It's like a rhetorical question where, "You're not going to jump off the roof, are you?" You're expecting a "No," answer. It's actually a statement of fact. He's saying, "Since we do have these things," so he's not questioning whether or not these things exist in our relationship with Christ and in the body, he's saying, "Since they do exist," as a lot of modern translations might have, you may have it in your Bible, it says, "Since there be," not "If there be," so it's an affirmation of the fact, or because of this is true.

Paul is giving us four incentives or grounds for Christian unity. These four things are true of all Christians. I want you to write them down as we go through them. The first is "consolation."

When we become a Christian, we find comfort and encouragement in the Lord, and we're to share that with others in the body of Christ. Go back to verse 1, "If there be therefore," since there is, "any consolation in Christ," stop right there. This phrase, "consolation," means encouragement. The root meaning of the word is that of coming alongside someone to give assistance by encouragement. Notice that it's encouragement, "in Christ." That's one of Paul's favorite phrases, "in Christ." As a matter of fact, it's the most commonly used phrase by Paul in his epistles, but it's one of the most commonly misunderstood terms by Christians today.

Let me break that down for you. If you are a Christian, you are "in Christ," or the Bible says you're "in Christ Jesus" or "in Christ Jesus, the Lord." The moment you are born again, the technical term is regenerated, which means given new life—you repent, you trust Jesus, you're born again—you are actually taken out of Adam in the position of condemnation and you are taken and placed into Christ. When you're saved, this happens to you without you asking for it, aware of it, conscious of it, seeking it. You just automatically, by the work of the Holy Spirit, are taken out of Adam and placed in Christ.

In Paul's epistle to the Romans, he talked about our position in Adam, whether sin, death, and condemnation, but that we have been placed in Christ. This is why Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," who are Christians, yet Christians go around feeling condemned all the time. It's fine to feel convicted, and you may need to repent about some sin, 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You lose fellowship, but you don't lose relationship. Once "in Christ," always "in Christ." I see no reason to believe that any person who has been taken out of Adam and placed into Christ can actually go back from being "in Christ," into Adam with sin, death, and condemnation. Again, Romans 8 opens with, "...no condemnation," ends with no separation, and in the middle, there's no defeat. It's a marvelous truth.

Read Ephesians 1 where Paul talks about, "...blessings in the heavenly places in Christ," this work of the Spirit of taking us out of Adam and placing us "in Christ," so we're all "in Christ" as believers. As I said, these are things we all share in common. There's no such thing—I'm not just saying this to say this, this is important—as a Christian who is not "in Christ." When you're "in Christ," you're a child of God. We got that down.

"In Christ," we have unity. John 17:21, when Jesus prayed, He said, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us," so He prayed for that unity, not only positional unity but experiential or practical unity demonstrated by our love and service to one another.

This word "consolation," or encouragement, is demonstrated by Barnabas in the book of Acts. He was actually called the son of consolation, son of encouragement. What a great nickname to have, right? Every time they saw Barnabas, some preachers call him Barney, they said, "Here's the son of encouragement," better than being known as the son of discouragement, right? "Run for your life!" Everybody he was around, everybody he was with, he encouraged

them. What an absolute blessing that is that my life, your life, our lives in the body of Christ, be an encouragement to others. We should learn to encourage others, to come alongside them, and to strengthen them. Ask yourself: Do I seek to encourage other believers in their relationship with Christ? We have the encouragement of His love.

Secondly, notice we have, verse 1, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ," and there is, "if any comfort of," His, "love," so we have encouragement in Christ, and we have comfort in Christ. What a comfort knowing that God loves us. I think it's kind of unique that Paul says, "... comfort of," His "love." It's so important that as a Christian you are comforted by the fact that God loves me, the love of God. What a marvelous truth that is!

Write down Ephesians 2:4-5. It says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us," that's regenerated us or we're born again, "together," there's the unity, "with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;" and in Romans 5:5 where Paul says, "...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," when we're born of God. It's one of the believer's birthmarks that we have love. It's a contradiction to say, "I'm a Christian, but I'm not one of the loving kind of Christians. I love God, but I hate people. Get outta my way, I'm in a hurry!" John actually says, "How can we say we love God, we have never seen, and not love our brother or sister who we have seen?" It's a contradiction. If we're God's children, we will have His characteristics, and Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

When the early church was born in the book of Acts, the unbelieving world looked onto them, "Look how they love one another." It's such a need for us to love each other and to comfort one another with God's love. If I can experience God's love for me, then, in turn, I can share it with others. 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." In John 13:34, Jesus gave us what He called "a new commandment." We're studying the Ten Commandments on Sunday morning, and by the way we're going to look at the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," pretty significant in light of what's going on in our culture today. In the second tablet of the law, which all deals with your love for your neighbor as yourself, If you love your neighbor as yourself, you're not going to steal from them; so we need to learn to love one another. Jesus said this is the birthmark of the believer, John 13:35.

God's love, this "new commandment" that you love one another as I have loved you, should be flowing through our hearts to others around us. It's giving back to others the love God has shown to us, so ask yourself a second question: Do I seek to love the brethren? That doesn't mean you'll always like everybody, but it means you love them. You say, "What's the difference?" The difference is love is seeking the highest good of that object loved. You may not approve of some of the things they do or say or how they act, but you want to seek the best for them and God's glory in their lives.

Here's the third thing that we have in verse 1, we have communion or fellowship, and this is in the Spirit. Look at verse 1. We have the encouragement in Christ, we have the comfort of His

love, and then we have, "...fellowship of the Spirit." The word "fellowship" is an important New Testament word. It's the Greek word *koinonia*, and it means joint participation. In Christian fellowship we have...the name of our church is Revival Christian Fellowship. It's not just a human invention, it's not just because we all go to the same church, it's because we're all "in Christ;" we have the same love for God and His love for us, and we have the same Holy Spirit that dwells in you, dwells in me, and dwells in others. Again, it's interesting that he ties it in with the Spirit because we all, as believers, the same Holy Spirit that worked in your life, has worked in my life.

Let me list for you, if you're taking notes, some of the things the Holy Spirit has done for us as believers. First, He convicted and convinced us of sin and our need of a Savior. If you're a Christian, you're a Christian because you came under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and you repented and put your faith and trust in Christ, so the Holy Spirit was involved in your salvation. Secondly, when you believe and trust in Jesus Christ, as I said, He regenerates you, you are born again. If you're a Christian, you are born of the Spirit of God.

Thirdly, He baptizes you into one body, that's the body of Christ, of which Christ is the head. 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Again, this happens to all believers. Then, He indwells all believers. Not only are all believers "in Christ," they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, baptized, by the Spirit, into Christ, but they are indwelt by the Spirit. This is why, if you're a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit. If you've been born again, you have the Holy Spirit. You can't be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit, and that's so important for you to understand.

We also see that He seals us, Ephesians 1:13, and tells us in Ephesians 4, "...ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Again, this is a work of the Holy Spirit which is why we should have unity and fellowship in the Spirit because we're all sealed by the Spirit, "...unto the day of redemption." He also leads us into all truth, John 14 and 16. Jesus said the Spirit of truth will lead you, teach you, and guide you into all truth. In Ephesians 5:18, He fills you, that is, He gives you power—controls your thoughts, your heart, your mind, your actions, you're under the control of the Holy Spirit—and He produces His fruit in you and through you.

Galatians 5 talks about the fruit of the Spirit. A lot of Christians are just fruits. We want spiritual fruit. I saw a bumper sticker once that said, "God wants spiritual fruit not religious nuts." The fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, temperance, self-control—can only be produced by the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. It's so very, very important. You can read about them in Galatians 5:22. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Ask yourself: Am I fellowshiping with other believers in the Holy Spirit in the *koinonia* of the body of Christ?

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, I've already mentioned it, it says, we as Christians, "...have been all made to drink into one Spirit," all been made to drink of that one Spirit, thus there should be unity. Now this is not uniformity, where we all have pressure from the outside, it's the unity which comes from the Holy Spirit within.

Here's our fourth, and last, word; that is, compassion. Look at verse 1. We have the consolation, we have the comfort, we have the communion, the fellowship of the Spirit, but we also have at the end of verse 2, my King James Bible says, "...bowels and mercies." In the old English the seat of emotion was the gut or the stomach, so they used the word "bowels" or the inward parts. When you feel something real deeply, you're touched in your emotions or your stomach. It actually is a reference to mercies and compassions or tender mercies, literally, and compassions.

It's interesting that God is declared in the Bible as being many things, but two things: merciful and compassionate. God is both merciful and compassionate. It's interesting that it's the New Testament and the New Testament Christian writers that really brought into light this concept of compassion and humility, and we're going to look at that in just a moment. It's interesting that God wants us to be like Him, so we should be merciful, or kind, and compassionate toward others.

Can't we just have a little compassion in the body of Christ? Can't we show just a little mercy on one another in the body of Christ instead of being so judgmental, critical, and fault-finding? Jesus said, "Judge not lest you be judged." Now, that doesn't mean you don't have discernment based on truth or error or the Scripture, the Word of God, and you don't make distinctions. It means you don't go around with a critical, censorious, fault-finding, attitude, judgmental of other people, that you show a little mercy. When God shows mercy to you, we should show mercy to others. Again, how great is this in a marriage relationship? Have mercy on your husband; have mercy on your wife. Sometimes we will actually say that, "Have mercy on me!" My dad used to use that phrase all the time, "Have mercy on me!" God has had mercy on you, you should have mercy on me; God has been compassionate with you, you should be compassionate with me as well. It's so very, very important. God He's been merciful and compassionate to us, we should be to others.

Jesus gave a parable of what is known as the unmerciful servant. Remember that servant that was forgiven this huge debt, and the minute he was forgiven of this huge debt he went out and found somebody that owed him a small little debt. He grabbed him by the collar and said, "Pay me what you owe me!" "Just give me some time and I will." Instead, he didn't show him mercy and threw them in prison. The first servant who was forgiven this great debt, his master that forgave him heard that, called him in and said, "Didn't I forgive you of a great debt, yet you left here and refused to forgive others of a smaller debt?" He said, "I'm going to take you and throw you in prison until you've paid the uttermost part of it." Unforgiveness, and not showing mercy, can lock us in a prison. It's so important that we show mercy and we are forgiving and compassionate towards others. If there's division in the body of Christ, it's because we're not showing mercy and compassion, so we need to do that with one another.

The second section of our text is verses 2-4. The first four verses are Paul's plea for unity; verses 5-11, will be the pattern for unity seen in Christ; and verses 12-16 will be the power that we need for unity in Christ. Notice, again, let's go back and read verses 2-4. "Fulfil ye my joy," fill up my cup of joy, make my joy complete, "that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being

of one accord, of one mind,” and he says, negatively, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but with lowliness,” humility, “of mind let each,” one of you, “esteem other better than themselves,” more important than themselves. “Look not every man on his own things,” or interests, “but every man also on the things of others.”

Paul’s directive is threefold. It’s only one directive or command, but he wants them to be likeminded. There are three graces that are needed in order to have this unity. I want you to write them down. Notice verse 2, you need oneness, “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded.” That word “likeminded” means keep on thinking the same things. He’s not talking about uniformity, but he’s talking about an attitude, an outlook. It doesn’t mean that we believe the same in every doctrinal issue, but it means we have the same attitude and outlook on life as believers. We don’t want to get nitpicky, we want to stand on the truth, and the essentials of Christianity must never be compromised; but let’s not divide over nonessentials or secondary issues. It literally means to be likeminded or keep on thinking the same thing. It’s not uniformity, which comes from pressure on the outside; it’s unity, which is the work of the Spirit on the inside.

What are we to think the same about? Write them down. First, we’re to think the same about the glory of God. All Christians, even if they disagree on nonessentials, should all want to think the same thing about the glory of God—to God be the glory, great things He has done! We should have a desire and a heart to glorify God. That’s one of the ways we experience unity in the body of Christ. It doesn’t matter who gets the ministries that we may want as long as Christ is preached or Christ is glorified. That’s all that matters. Remember Philippians 1 where there were preachers who were preaching from wrong motives, but Christ was preached so Paul said, “I rejoice, and will continue to rejoice.” What we need to have, and ask yourself this tonight, “Am I living for the glory of God or am I living for selfishness or am I living for what I want rather than the glory of God?”

The second thing we should think the same about is the evangelization of the lost, so the glorification of God, Philippians 1:20, the evangelization of the lost, Philippians 1:27, and then in Philippians 4:8, the unification of the church. Those are essentials in our attitude and outlook we need to have in the body of Christ. Not only should we have the same thinking, outlook, or attitude, but notice in verse 2, “...having the same love.” It’s a love for God—we should all love God. If you are a Christian, we should be able to get along because you love God and I love God. One of the neat things about coming to church and in fellowship is that you get to be with people who love God. We’re a bunch of God lovers tonight. You go to work tomorrow, you’re with a bunch of God haters. Maybe you go home and you’re with a God hater. What a blessing to be in the house of the Lord with the people of the Lord, the people of God, hearing the Word of the Lord, and all of us loving God together. It’s such a blessing to worship together, to study God’s Word together, and to love God together.

Secondly, we should have the same love for our neighbor. Didn’t Jesus say, “Love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love your neighbor...” “Oh, I can love God, He’s lovable, but my neighbor is a messed up person—hard to love. I think I’ll just stick to loving

God!" "...and love your neighbor as yourself." Wow, that's difficult! It so graphically describes what we're covering in these verses.

Thirdly, love the brethren, the Christian body of Christ, your brothers and sisters. Love one another. Read 1 John, again, the birthmark of the Christian—love for the brethren. This is how we know, the Bible says, "...we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." I remember before I got saved, I didn't like Christians. They were creepy. They looked clean, they smiled, and said, "Praise the Lord." It was creepy. They raised their hands and sang to the Lord, clapped and all that stuff. It's like, "Wipe that Christian smile off your face." Then, I got saved and I fell in love with God and I fell in love with God's people. It was really blowing my mind because I thought, Here am I in church loving Christians because I love God. Something's actually happened to me. This is crazy! Not only do I love God's Word, not only do I love God, but I loved the believers, other Christians. That's an indication that you've passed from death unto life the having the same love for the brethren. It's so very important.

The oneness in verse 2 is the graces that we need for the unity, the directives, "...being of one accord, of one mind." That word "one accord" means joint souls or joined together in a kindred spirit. It's body, soul, and spirit loving others. One body of Christ, one Holy Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, read Ephesians 4:4-6, "There is one body, and one Spirit...one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism," and then "...of one mind," verse 2, that is thinking consistently the one thing, that we have one purpose—again, the love of God, the glory of God, and the love of the brethren, verse 5, same as Jesus. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," we have the mind of Christ, and we're going to see that next week as we read about His emptying and coming down from Heaven.

Notice verse 3, we're also to have lowliness. The graces we need for unity are oneness or likemindedness. The second one is lowliness, verse 3, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory," we're going to see that those are the things that hinder unity, strife and vainglory, "...but in lowliness of mind," or humility of mind, "let each esteem other better," or more important, "than themselves." Oneness cannot be achieved without two things: lowliness and humility. This is why this has its primary application to the body of Christ, the believers, or a fellowship, and it has a great secondary application to our other relationships, especially in a marriage relationship. If we have lowliness and humility, we will experience oneness.

Notice the two things that cause disunity, the negatives: strife and vainglory. Strife is selfish ambition. It speaks of a competitive spirit. In 2 Timothy 2:24, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive," it actually has the idea of politicking or striving for position in the body of Christ, so there's not to be any strife or selfish ambition in the church today. Vainglory is empty conceit. These are so detrimental and destructive when it comes to unity in the body of Christ.

Remember when Jesus was facing the cross His disciples were arguing among themselves who among them would be the greatest in the Kingdom. They were hanging out with Jesus, they saw Him washing their feet, they saw His humility, His compassion, His love, but they're all like, "I'm going to be the greatest in the Kingdom," and there was the division and strife among

them. If the disciples of Jesus, who had just spent three years hanging out with the Lord, were not getting along, it's going to be a challenge for us to get along with one another. Vainglory and strife are going to ruin unity.

It's interesting, too, that James and John sent their mom to Jesus and asked, "Jesus, when You get to Heaven, can my two boys sit next to You, one on Your right hand and one on Your left?" a mother's ambition for her son—no big deal, Lord, after You raise from the dead, go back to Heaven, and are seated on the throne, could you put a couple seats right next to You, one for my son, John, and one for my son, James? Jesus said, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I will drink of?" She said, "Oh," and they said, "Yeah, we're able." They were actually martyred for their faith. It's interesting that we don't want to be ambitious or have selfish strife and empty conceit. In 3 John 1:9, Diotrephes, in the church there, John says, "...who loveth to have the preeminence among them."

I want you to note the two attitudes for unity: humility and lowliness of mind, and secondly, esteeming others as more important than yourself. These are amazing verses. I know you know them, I know you've heard them, but I want you to think about them. First, humility. Humility is an interesting thing. In the Greco-Roman world it was despised. Because of the Christian influence on the western world today, it's a virtue that people recognize and appreciate, but it was something that Christianity introduced to the world. They despised humility, and it was something that was coined in New Testament times and clearly taught in the New Testament because Jesus was humble. The danger of self-esteem that has crept into the church and listening to the world—loving yourself first, not loving God, not loving others but thinking about yourself—is self destructive. If you want to destroy your marriage, this is the great way to do it. I'm not recommending you do this. People say, "Well, I just need to find myself. My marriage is holding me back. It's not good for me. It doesn't meet my needs." "...let each esteem other better than themselves."

Years ago when the world's self-esteem movement crept into the church it was so destructive. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," "Oh, no, no, no, no, no. We don't like that verse." "...and take up his cross, and follow me." When you become a Christian, you die to your goals, your plans, your ambitions, your wishes. "I am crucified with Christ," Paul said, "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live...I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Write that down, humility. It's called "lowliness of mind." Humility is that virtue that if you know you have it, you don't. When you have a church meeting and you're going to have a testimony service and people stand up, "I just want to thank God. This week I became totally humble." (applause) "Thank you, thank you, thank you." "You're awesome. Can I touch you after church?" If you were humble, you just lost it, Buckaroo. My favorite definition of humility is not thinking too highly of yourself, not thinking too lowly of yourself, just not thinking of yourself. We've all known people like that. The work of the Holy Spirit is selfless. It's not about me. It's not about my will, what I want—me, myself, and I—the unholy trinity, "Why don't these people get out of my way! Why are they always mean to me? Why do they talk to me that way? Why

aren't they nicer to me?" We get so consumed with our own needs.

This is why we're coming up to verse 5 next week, "Let this," same "mind," or attitude that was found in Christ, "be in you...Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," not something to hold onto but He emptied Himself, "...and took upon him the form of a servant...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That's what a Christian is to be, like Jesus, humble—meek, lowly, and humble.

Notice it also says, verse 3, "...esteem other better than themselves." Again, it's not self-esteem, we do love ourselves, but we need to love others as we love ourselves. We shouldn't hate ourselves and put ourselves down, but we shouldn't think about or live for ourselves. The NASB says, "Regard one another as more important than himself." How important that is to regard others more important than you. It's not my needs, it's your needs. We have oneness, verse 2; lowliness in verse 3; and here's the last one, verse 4, helpfulness. Look at verse 4. "Look not," this is what we're not to do, "every man," or person, "on his own things," that's actually a reference to don't be self-absorbed looking after your own concerns and interests, "but every man also on the things," or the interests, "of others."

Paul says two things: Don't only look out for your own personal interests; secondly, but also for the interests or the needs or concerns of others. Others, others, others, others. If you want to have a miserable life, put yourself first. If you want to have a blessed life, if you want a happy life, put Jesus first, others second, and you last. I just thought I'd encourage you guys tonight. Realize that God has been merciful, God has been gracious, God has been kind, God has been forgiving. How could we not be that to others around you. The emptiness or the selfish life, but the joy and blessing of a selfless life is so very, very important.

This is how it's going to go down, and I'll wrap it up. In verses 5-11, we're going to have an example of this kind of life in Jesus; in verse 17, we're going to have the example of Paul; in verse 20, we're going to have the example of Timothy, who cared and served others; and then we're going to have one of the hidden heroes in the book of Philippians, verse 30, Epaphroditus, who "...for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death," he almost died to minister to Paul who was in prison in Rome. Only Jesus can save us from our empty, self-centered lives. Jesus said, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." Let's pray.