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Philippians – The Blueprint for Joy #7

Welcome to OIC. We are continuing our study in the letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi. He has expressed to them already how his joy is founded on his relationship with Jesus and that external circumstances could not take away his joy. He even went as far as to say ‘it didn’t matter whether he lived or died’. He could find joy in either condition. There appears to be nothing within this letter that suggests anything was wrong doctrinally or theologically with the church at Philippi. But remember that he has probably received a report from Epaphroditus concerning some problems within the church. Even as far back as chapter 1 verse 27 Paul begins to address these problems. Paul begins to address a problem that seems to be lurking just below the surface. It is the problem of disunity in the church so at this juncture of our study Paul begins to write about Christian living. Our support text today is Philippians 2:1-4.

Philippians 2:1-4

1Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves

⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Paul wants to exhort the church, us included, to produce unity that produces joy. Paul talks about 3 aspects that will produce that unity.

Aspect #1 Our Motivation for Unity

Philippians 2:1

1Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

Generally speaking, the church in Philippi is a quality group of people but in spite of that there is a deadly snake filled with venomous poison and that snake is called disunity. So, Paul takes it upon himself to remind the church and us here at OIC of what motivates us to display unity. Look carefully at this verse and you will see the word “if”. This doesn’t mean signify a matter of doubt which may exist, but rather a confirmation of what does exist. We might better read this word “if” as “since” or “because”. Now let us read it again.

Since there is love and comfort found in Christ, and in our relationship with Christians, we should be motivated in obedience to follow the teaching of Jesus. Here is another verse from Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth which also emphasizes this truth.

II Corinthians 1:3-5

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

⁴who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

⁵For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

He goes on to say because there is fellowship of the Spirit who in this case is the Holy Spirit another verse suggests this as well. Again, this is from another letter that Paul wrote to the church at Corinth.

I Corinthians 12:13

For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

When the same Holy Spirit who lives in you lives in me I am sure He wants unity or He would basically be fighting against Himself. When we say unity of the church we mean unity of the Spirit. We sometimes call it koinonia. Paul goes on to say because we have affection and compassion for one another we should therefore have unity. God pours out mercy and compassion into our lives. Is it right for us to withhold it from others? So, we have all these benefits – encouragement, love, compassion, fellowship – what results should they achieve in our lives? Unity that produces joy.

Aspect #2 The Nature of the Unity that Produces Joy

Philippians 2:2

then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

In other words, what does a church look like when it has unity that produces joy? First, it will have likemindedness.

I Corinthians 1:10

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment

And further, how does that same mindedness manifest itself in the body of believers? In other words, we will love the same things in the same way. We will love the church, we will love God's Word, and we will do it in a sincere fervent manner with a pure heart.

I Peter 1:23

for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

Seems like a pretty formidable task but let us not forget we are to be motivated by the benefits that we have received and do it in the power of the Holy Spirit. When it says we should be content on one purpose it really means the purpose of glorifying God in all we do and say. Being the light of the world inside these walls and outside in a lost world. In other words not simply being AT church on occasion, but BEING church all the time, 7 days a week.

Aspect #3 The Attitudes Required for a Unity that Produces Joy

Philippians 2:3,4

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others

It seems to me as I read these verses that it is telling us not to be self-centered but to be Christ centered so we must get rid of selfish ambition and conceit. God expects us to display humility and regard everyone else as more important than ourselves. A daunting task in a world that shouts 'me

first!" Humility should be easy to maintain if we just remember our own faults. Paul also stated in Romans 12:10b that we should give preference to others.

Romans 12:10b

give preference to one another in honor;

In verse 4 Paul says do not only look out for your own personal interest, but look out for others. I wonder if you've ever shopped at Konomiya Especially on a day when they have 20% off all groceries. When you do, you will see how people do not look out for others but simply look out for their own interest.

Conclusion

What a marvelous passage from God's Word. I know each of us can make the world a better place. If we utilize the 3 things Paul suggests here. And recognize what motivates us, namely all the benefits that we receive and recognize what a church should look like when we are united in the same Spirit with a common purpose of glorifying God and carrying the right attitude by putting others first. These are the truths of God's Word. As the Apostle Paul suggests, make my joy complete. When we do, we know that our church will honor God. Let's pray.