

Place: Lurgan Baptist 7:12:2014

Reading: Philippians 2:1-4

THE JOURNEY TO JOY

6. HOW TO GET ALONG WITH THE FAMILY

The pastor of an evangelical church handed a questionnaire to each person in his congregation asking them to answer three questions about the aims of their church and the means of achieving them.

1. What should be the corporate aims of this church ?
2. What prevents us from achieving these aims ?
3. What spiritual and practical steps are needed in our church to help achieve these aims ?

For some folk it was the first time they had thought about their church's spiritual condition or about any higher aims. Almost without exception the congregation saw a two- fold goal for their church. ***A deeper and more meaningful worship of God, and out of this a further aim of serving the Lord more effectively.*** In other words they wanted their worship to be deeper and their service more effective than it was at present. Impossible ? Not at all. With the Lords help these aims could become a reality in that church. So what was stopping the church from fulfilling these aims ? One person stated, " *The trouble is we don't all get on together as we could.*" Another person felt, " *Not all of us share the same ideas on how to bring about what we want.*"

Others wrote, " *The trouble is, the old ones don't understand us young ones. Relationships amongst some of our congregation seem to be strained, and this obviously effects our corporate worship and service.*" One basic thought emerged, it would be a great church if it weren't **for the people**. Problems in personal relationships in the church appeared as the largest hindrance to deeper worship and more effective service. **People** were the problem. Are they the problem in this church ? Many churches are like the cartoon which showed two sections of a congregation, sitting with their backs to one another and each facing a sidewall. The preacher is in the pulpit and he is saying, " *It's come to my attention that there's been a split in the church.*"

" *I love mankind,*" said a famous character, "***Its people I can't stand.***" Philippians is the joy letter of the Bible and people can rob us of joy. What people are, and say and do. Paul was facing his problems with people at Rome (1:15-18) as well as with people in Philippi, and it was the latter who concerned him the most. You see, when Epaphroditus brought a generous gift from the church in Philippi, and the good news of the church's concern for Paul, he also brought the bad news of a possible division in the church family. Smouldering beneath the surface of an otherwise spiritual church, was the threat of division. For example, there were two women who were not on speaking terms.

You see, as is often the case *the domestic affairs* of the church, were not as ideal as *the foreign affairs* of the

church. There was trouble on the home front. *Paul wanted them to see that the basic cause of their division was selfishness, and the cause of selfishness is pride.* You see, the attitude which was needed by these young believers was one of submission and servant-hood. If they learned to serve one another, they would not be slandering each other. ***Now isn't it interesting here that Paul links his own joy to the unity of the Philippian church. I mean, do you recall Paul's circumstances ?*** He is writing from his own hired house. He is chained 24/7 to a Roman soldier, he is being vilified by those who ought to be his friends, he has no guarantee of his future and yet what is his concern ? Well he says in (2:2) " *Fulfil ye my joy that ye be likeminded*" We could paraphrase it " *I will need no further happiness if only I can hear that you are a united church.*"

What a man. As ever Paul's concern was for others not for self. So here he talks about " **How to get along with the Family.**" Notice Paul gives,

(1) SOME REASONS FOR SPIRITUAL UNITY

Notice that four times in the opening verse he uses the word " *If.*" *Now* this phrase " *If there is,*" would be better translated " *Since there is.*" Paul is not doubting these things he is assuming the certainty of these things. You see, these statements make a strong appeal for harmony in the body of Christ. Notice Paul talks about,

(a) CONSOLATION:

Now in our day " *console,* " means largely to comfort, and consolation is what we seek to give to someone in a state of shock and grief. But in the time of the King James translators, however, the word " *consolation,* " meant more than this. It meant encouragement or support. Consequently, the word came to be used in architecture for a bracket used to support a cornice or part of an arch. Paul was speaking of the encouragement to unity that believers find in Christ. He says, " *Since there is encouragement in Christ.*" Now what is this encouragement in Christ ? It is the support that the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples to live together in love. Do you recall that Christ taught His disciples, to take the lowest places at the table, giving honour to the other person ? (Lk 14:10)

Do you remember that on the eve of His departure from them He gave them this command ? " *Love one another, as I have loved you.*" (*Jn 13:34*) And Christian love means that we treat each other the way God treats us. My does Christ's commands mean anything to you ? Does His encouraging support not stimulate you to unity ? (a)

(b) COMFORT:

" *Since there is comfort of love,*" (2:1) Now Paul knew that Christians are hard to get along with. *Christians are like porcupines. They have many good points, but they are hard to close to. The main reason is their prickly personalities keep needling each other.* Now believers were probably as hard to get along with in Paul's day as they are in ours. But Paul also knew

that the believer had a duty to see more than the other Christians faults. For the believer must also see the person, and he must love him with a love patterned on the love with which God the Father loves us. My we have experienced the love of God. Indeed Paul says " *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.*" (Rom 5:5) We have experienced God's love and now we are to exhibit God's love. Tell me, does God cast away the believer who offends Him ? The one who sins ? The one who displeases Him ? Not at all. On the contrary, His love reaches out further as He seeks to draw Him back to Himself. Now that love must flow through you, and it must be your pattern. (a) (b)

(c) COMMUNION:

Do you see what he says ? " *Since there is fellowship of the Spirit*" (2:1) "*Fellowship,*" refers to the partnership of common eternal life, provided by the indwelling Spirit. (1 Cor 3:16 12:13) Now one might ask the question, " *If each believer is indwelt by the Spirit why is there not that practical unity among the saints of which Paul speaks ?*" The answer is very simple. Not every Christian is living a Spirit filled life. My was this not the problem within the church at Philippi ? Was this not the very reason why two Christians in that fellowship were not on speaking terms with each other ? The Holy Spirit was not in full control of their lives, for if He had been there would have been harmony. *Now did you notice here that in the first three items that Paul mentions here we have the Trinity brought before us ?* Christ, Gods love, the

fellowship of the Holy Spirit. (2 Cor 13:14) You see, this salvation we have this has come to us through the activity of the Triune God ? The Father electing, the Son purchasing, the Spirit applying. The result ? We are not only united to God, but with every other fellow believer. My are you beginning to see the incentives for this unity ? (a) (b) (c)

(d) COMPASSION:

" *Bowels and mercies*" that is heart and compassion. Paul was appealing to his friend's natural sympathy, tenderness and feeling. Surely, they of all people would not want to add to his bonds by giving him grief. Paul says, " *Fulfil ye my joy,*" that is

complete it," My Paul's cup of joy was pretty well full, but there was still room for a few more drops. And what would fill that cup of joy to overflowing ? The news that his quarrelling friends had settled their differences forever, at the foot of the cross. If such unity brought joy to Paul's heart, what do you think it would do for many a pastor ? My what does Christianity mean to you ? Is there anything to your profession ? Is Christ real to you ? Will *how does this matter of unity stand with you ?*

Are there divisions here that ought not to exist ? Are there hard feelings ? Are there some of you, not on speaking terms with each other ? Well, " since there is consolation in Christ, since there is comfort of love, since there is fellowship of the Spirit, since there is bowels and mercies fulfil ye my joy, be like-minded."

(2) SOME RESTRAINTS TO SPIRITUAL UNITY

For did you notice that Paul speaks here about some of the things that stop us from achieving spiritual harmony ? Mark Twain once said, " *I built a cage, and in it I put a dog and a cat. After a little training I got the dog and the cat to the point where they lived peaceably together. Then I introduced a pig, a goat, a kangaroo, some birds and a monkey. And after a few adjustments, they learned to live in harmony together. So encouraged was I by such success that I added a Presbyterian, a Jew, a Muslim, along with a Baptist missionary I captured on the same trip. And in a very short time there **wasn't** a single living thing left in the cage.*" Now I am not for ecumenical unity, but I am for unity within the local church. My God walks unity, the devil wants division. Notice the things that hinder harmony. There is,

(a) **PERSONAL RIVALRY:**

" *Strife*" (2:3) " *Strife,* " has the idea of factiousness and contention. It denotes " *ambition, self-seeking, and rivalry*" It has to do with a party spirit, with a faction within the church that wants to promote its aims and ambitions as opposed to another group. My when a church is divided into cliques following different men, then there will be a party spirit, and one party will compete with another party for power, and position and prominence. There is unholy rivalry and unity is destroyed. My have you never seen a church tearing itself apart as one group

competes with another group ? As one party tries to get there man in here, and the other group tries to get there man in there. Unholy Rivalry destroys the unity of the body. (a)

(b) **PERSONAL GLORY:**

Paul calls it " *vainglory* " (2:3) Self-promotion. It speaks of an over-inflated self image. Big head, large ego. One lady arrived to church late for a service and waited outside in the vestibule for a convenient time to slip into the service. After listening to the preacher for a few minutes she asked an usher, " *Who is that in there preaching ?*" The usher said, " *I don't know, but he sure does recommend himself highly* " You see, if strife pulls the other person down, then vainglory puts oneself up. Is this not exactly what some of the preachers in Rome were doing ? Paul was imprisoned and they were grasping the opportunity to promote themselves, to advance their own interests, to gain prestige.

Is this not exactly what happened in the wilderness when the children of Israel were marred by a spirit of criticism and chronic complaining ? This spirit came to a head in the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who challenged the right of Moses and Aaron to be the leaders of Gods people, " *Ye take too much upon you,*" the rebels said." (Num 16:3) You see, they wanted to pull Moses and Aaron down and put themselves up. *Personal Glory.* Is this you ? Are you more concerned about calling attention to yourself than to your Saviour ? Or is your cry that of the Baptist, " *He must*

increase, but I must decrease." (Jn 3:30) My do you see what hinders unity in the local church ? (a) (b)

(c) PERSONAL SUFFICIENCY:

Self-sufficiency, self-indulgence, in a word downright selfishness. Do you see how Paul puts it ? "*Look not every man on his own things.*" (2:4) All men look out for Number One. Most people are really only happy when they can look about them and sing,

*Oh, what a beautiful morning
Oh, what a beautiful day,
I've got a beautiful feeling
Everything's going My way*

My are we so exclusively occupied with our own interests that we are entirely oblivious to everyone's else's ? The barrier of (a) (b) (c) My are these things harming your fellowship with some fellow-believer ? Is it not time that you took the obstacle down and let the blessing fall ? For Paul not only speaks here about, (1) (2)

(3) SOME RESULTS OF SPIRITUAL UNITY

Do you recall the words of (Ps 133) ? "*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*" Do you know what it produces ?

(a) A LIFE OF HARMONY:

Look if you will at (2:2) A life of harmony involves,

I. ONENESS OF PURPOSE:

" *Be like-minded,*" this is oneness in aim and feeling. Now it's very evident that Christians will never see eye to eye on all points. We don't always see things the same way and at times there are misunderstandings among us about certain matters. I heard about a woman that answered the knock at her door and found a destitute man standing there. He wanted to earn money by doing odd jobs, so she asked, " *Can you paint ?* " " *Yes,*" he said " *I'm a pretty good painter* " " *Well, here's a gallon of green paint and a brush. Go behind the house and you'll see a porch that needs repainting. Be very careful. When you're done, I'll look it over and pay you what it's worth.*" In one hour he was back at the door again, "*All finished,* " he reported with a smile.

" *Did you do a good job ?*" she asked, " *Yes, lady, but there's one thing I would like to point out to you. That's not a Porsche back there. That's a Mercedes.*" My we'll never see eye to eye on all things. How then can we be of " *one mind,* ? " Only when we have the " *mind of Christ,*" a selfless mind. 1.

2. ONENESS OF PASSION:

" *having the same love,*" (2:2) Mental agreement would not last long, if they did not put their hearts into it. A feeling of love and regard for each other was needed. Do you recall what was said of the early Christians, "*See how these Christians love another* "

3. ONENESS OF POWER:

" being of one accord" (2:2) The idea is that of uniting and harnessing our energies so there is not waste. The king of Sparta was once asked why his famous city was not surrounded by walls. Pointing to the citizens all filled with enthusiasm, he answered, *" These are the walls of the Spartan state. With these separate men, yet one in power, all enemies can be repelled."*

4. ONENESS IN PROGRAMME:

" Of one mind," or *" minding the one thing."* My what was the one thing that Paul was most concerned about ? The gospel. Do you know something ? I have discovered that whenever you've a group of people united in spreading the gospel you will find that they have no time for factions, grumbling or backbiting. Do you see what unity produces ? (a)

(b) A LIFE OF HUMILITY:

" In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves," (2:4) Besides the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul himself stands out as one of the true examples of this humility. During his third missionary journey, he referred to himself as *" the least of the apostles,"* (1 Cor 15:9) Later, during his first Roman imprisonment, he described himself as *" the least of all saints,"* (Eph 3:8) Toward the close of his life, he wrote to Timothy and confessed that he considered himself the *" chief of sinners."* (1 Tim 1:15) These

were not statements of false piety, but represented Paul's attitude toward himself as he viewed the totality of the body of Christ. There was no pride or arrogance about his many accomplishments. He truly considered others better than himself. Gary Inrig tells about a well known businessman who once demonstrated the ugliness of a boastful spirit in a public church service. As a matter of courtesy he was asked to bring a word of greeting. He said,

' I have a large house, a fine family, a successful business, and a good reputation. I have enough money to do whatever I want, and I am able to support some Christian ministries very generously, and many organizations want me to be a director. I have health and almost unlimited opportunities. Most people would love to change places with me. What more could God give me ? ' As he paused for effect, a voice shouted from the back of the hall, **' How about a good dose of humility ?'**

Andrew Murray said, *" The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself He simply does not think of himself at all."* He is like the Lord Jesus who did not consider His equality with God as something to be held onto but He humbled Himself. Christ did not think of Himself at all. He thought of others. Is your attitude Christ-like ? Not overestimating yourself and thereby falling into the trap of pride. Not underestimating yourself and thereby falling into the trap of a false humility. You see, humility, is a grace that when you think you have it, you have lost it. Now do you see the results of unity ? (a) (b)

(c) A LIFE OF HELPFULNESS:

" Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others." (2:4) Watchman Nee, the Chinese evangelist tells of a Christian he once knew in China. He was a poor rice farmer and his fields lay high on a mountain. Every day he poured water into the paddies of new rice. And every morning he returned to find that an unsaved neighbour who lived down the hill had opened the dikes surrounding the Christian's field to let the water fill his own. For a while the Christian ignored the injustice, but at last he became desperate. *What should he do ?* His own rice would die, if this continued. *How long could it go on ?*

The believers met, prayed and came up with this solution. The next day the Christian farmer rose early in the morning, and first filled his neighbours fields, then he attended to his own. Watchman Nee tells how the neighbour subsequently became a Christian, his unbelief overcome by a genuine demonstration of a Christians love for others. My the secret of joy in spite of circumstances is **The Single Mind.** (Ch 1) The secret of joy in spite of people is **The Submissive Mind.** (Ch 2) We need to see ourselves as nothing more than servants, nothing less than servants and nothing else but servants. It's all about the attitude of servanthood, a keen willingness to serve others.

My are you concerned for " *others,* " ? The life service of our Lord was dedicated to " *others.* " When the people of Capernaum pressed the Lord to remain with them, He said, " *I must preach the kingdom of*

God to other cities also." (Lk 4:43) Did He not remind His disciples, " *Other sheep I have which are not of this fold them also I must bring.* " (Jn 10:16) The taunting cry of the watchers at Calvary is an eloquent testimony of the selfless ministry of our Saviour, "*He saved others Himself He cannot save.*" (Matt 27:42) Our Lord Jesus lived and died for " **others.**" Will you dedicate yourself to anything less ? Years ago the Salvation Army had a great convention in the U.S.A. They were very anxious for the old General William Booth to go out to America and open the conference, but his Doctors thought that he was too frail for such a long journey. William Booth promised that instead of going he would write a message with which the conference might be opened. The great day near but no message arrived.

The manuscript that was expected did not arrive. The Chairman had taken his place on the platform, the meeting had started, and then very dramatically a cable, a telegram was handed up to the Chairman. He tore it open, " *It's the message from the General,*" he said. But instead of a long exhortation that telegram contained but one word and the Chairman read it out to the meeting. " **Others,**" signed William Booth.

**Others, Lord ! Yes others !
Let this my motto be,
Help me to live for others,
That I might live for Thee**