

PHILIPPIANS

The Epistle of

Joy



Old Testament Reading – Deuteronomy 6:1-9

New Testament Reading – Ephesians 4:1-6

The Epistle of Joy

“A Unity that Adorns the Gospel”

Philippians 2:1-4

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The church at Philippi was theologically strong and doctrinally sound, which means it was a spiritually healthy church, and, therefore, a very warm and loving church.

- Paul planted the church during his second missionary journey in A.D. 50 or 51. Although he was with them for only a few months, a bond developed between them that lasted for more than 10 years.
- Paul said it was right for him to love them, for not only had they supported his mission to get the gospel to the Gentiles, but they had ministered to him personally while he was in prison for preaching the gospel.
- Paul considered the church at Philippi to be a model church. They were a praying church, an obedient church, a faithful church, and a biblically organized church. The church had not strayed from sound doctrine, nor were they

dealing with any kind of immoral behavior.

- However, Paul warned them to guard against the threat of disunity, and he exhorted them to take whatever steps necessary to deal with it.

Disunity is a major issue in many churches today, and it is a dark cloud that is hanging over the whole Christian Church today.

- The Apostle Paul addressed that issue in his letters to the churches:
- To the Philippians – ***“Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”***
- To the Romans – ***“Be devoted to one another in love; prefer one another in honor. Be of the same mind and humble.”***
- To the Corinthians – ***“There should be no divisions among you; you should be of the same mind and the same judgment.”***
- To the Corinthians – ***“Be like-minded and live in peace.”***
- To the Ephesians – ***“Walk in unity.”***
- To the Colossians – ***“Pursue unity the bond of peace, by love.”***
- To the Thessalonians – ***“Excel more in love.”***

Over the last 50 years, evangelical churches have been intentionally divided over the various philosophies of ministry.

- Rather than following the biblical strategy of evangelism, discipleship, and methods of spiritual maturity as clearly outlined in the Scripture, church growth gurus challenged pastors and churches to abandon those old ways that focused on theology, doctrine, and the biblical principles of the Christian life, and build their ministries on the felt-needs of the unchurched in their community.
- The expository preaching of the Word of God was replaced with short, topical talks on the temporal benefits of being a Jesus follower.
- Calling sinners to repentance was replaced with compassion, understanding, and the acceptance of the sinner.
- Congregational Hymns and biblically sound choir anthems were replaced with theologically light, easily memorized choruses.
- The results of that man-centric marketing strategy were reported in a recent survey by the Barna Group. As of January, 2025:
- 60% of all adults do not believe God exists or has any effect on their daily lives.
- 47% of those who consider themselves to be Christians and 40% of those who claim to be born-again Christians do not believe God exists or that He has any effect on their daily lives.
- According to a survey by the Pew Research Group, this seeker-sensitive strategy did not stop the rapid decline in church membership.

- For every 100 people who join the Catholic Church, 840 people leave.
- For every 100 people who join a Protestant or Evangelical church, 180 people leave.

The Church is not a human institution organized by man for the benefit of man, but rather, a Divine Institution formed by God's grace and for God's purpose. However, while we should be grieved over these reports:

- Now each local church can restore the true nature of the Church as the Universal Body of Christ; that mystical union that binds every believer with every other believer into one body with Jesus Christ as Head.
- Now each local church can re-establish itself on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the Chief Cornerstone.
- Now each local church can refocus on the proclamation of the gospel to our neighbors and to the nations and on the intentional, personal discipleship of those who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior.
- Now each church can return to God-focused worship services, where families of believers can assemble on the Lord's Day and give the Lord the glory that is due His Holy name.

The Apostle Paul called the church at Philippi to develop a unity among the members that would adorn the gospel. He described it as the unity of humility.

- Philippians 1:29 – ***“Now that you know it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only for you to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”***
- Philippians 1:27 – ***“Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ...[see that] you are standing fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”***
- Philippians 2:2 – ***“Being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”***

1. The Motivation of Paul's Appeal – Philippians 2:1 – *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy.”*

- **Our consolation in Christ** – the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to conform our lives to the image of the Lord Jesus.
- **The assurance of God's love** – the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the evidence that God will keep His eternal promises.
- **The fellowship of the Holy Spirit** – we yield our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit inspires us to live our lives for the glory of the One who saved us.
- **God's affection and mercy** – the continual expression of God's love.

2. The Manifestation of Paul's Appeal – Philippians 2:2 – *“Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”*

- **Being like-minded** – not thinking the same things, but thinking about all things in the same way; according to biblical doctrine.

- **Having the same love** – human love is fickle – when love is given, love is expected in return. Christians’ love for each other and for those who are lost, is based on our knowledge of and response to God’s love for us – i.e., undeserved, and unconditional.
- **Being of one accord** – the Greek word used here means to be “united in Spirit,” or “together at the soul;” to have the same love, the same desire, the same passion, the same hope, and the same goal, which is to glorify the Lord and to praise Him forever.

3. The Means of Paul’s Appeal – Philippians 2:3-4 – “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*”

- **First the negative** – do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit – in effect, do nothing for self-glory or personal recognition. If a local church is to experience this level of unity, individual agendas and group agendas must be merged into one, or the church will die.
- **Then the positive** – with the humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourself. That doesn’t mean that they are more important, but they are to be treated as if they were.
- **The negative that ends in a positive** – each church member should not only look out for their own interests but also for the interests of others.

In John 13:34-35, Jesus told His disciples, ***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”***

In John 17:20-21, Jesus prayed to the Father: ***“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”***