

Philippians XII – “Complete My Joy” (Phil 2:2)

Introduction – It is amazing how much time is given in the letters of Paul to the sin of divisions in the body of Christ. Even in Philippi, so much of Paul’s concern for this faithful church is some indication of a lack of love, an indifferent spirit, a seed of divisiveness, that threatens to destroy the church known for its faithful testimony. It’s not enough to have your doctrinal ducks in a row.

The Text – *Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

Paul’s Plea – Remember, Paul’s plea is based upon the ‘if’ statements in verse 1. His command to them is to come because of the truth of the manifold mercies of Christ. But the command is there.

The Thing That Completes Paul’s Joy – Under house-arrest in Rome, his life hanging in the balance upon the whims of those who consider him a threat, what is Paul longing for the most? Not his release. He understood the importance of the church to bring salvation to the world, and he understood the threat that divisions inside the church would bring to her success. And he cared about that more than he cared about his own immediate, personal comfort.

The Church – Paul knows that it is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). He understood that it was the church corporately that had been decreed by God to be the chief instrument to bring glory to God and spread the gospel to the world. The church has been promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her (Matt 16:18). The church is the Bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the New Jerusalem, and so the church is Paul’s primary concern and chief joy upon the earth (Psalm 137:4-6).

Joy Unfulfilled – Paul is concerned that his joy will be incomplete because a child of God cannot rejoice fully when the church is weak or ignorant or disobedient (3 John 4).

My Joy – Paul does not appeal to making God happy, but making Paul happy. Is there an obligation for us with regard to those who will give an account for our souls? Yes – Heb 13:17. There is an obligation to please God and our shepherds and those who are over us in the Lord (elders, parents, husbands, rulers).

Paul’s Command – It is not simply a plea, but a command from Paul. Because we have such mercies of God (v1), we are to obey this command. Because we have such mercies of God, we can obey. God gives what He commands.

Like-Minded – We are to ‘be of the same mind’ toward one another. We are to have the mind of Christ (the demeanor described in verse 1) towards each other. This is not to say that we are to overlook sin. We are to understand how Jesus did not overlook sin, but covered sin, and then see how we are to do the same. To be like-minded is not to say that we are not to pursue truth and do so with great veracity. It does mean that we must do so in a spirit of love and care for one another.

What Does This Involve? – Paul expands on this command, describing in more detail what he means that we be like-minded.

Having the Same Love – We are reminded of the love of God in Christ for us (Rom 5:6-8, Eph 1:3-5), a love that was based on His choice and not our merit. We are to choose the same love for one another in Christ (Eph 4:31-32). How are we to be like Christ in our mindedness towards His body? Have the same love that Christ has.

Being of One Accord – Literally, “together in soul”. We are not simply members of the same congregation. We must take seriously that we are one body. We are not a collection of individual BBs that are gathered into one bag for a couple hours on Sunday. We have been joined together by the Spirit. If a toe is sore, how does the rest of your body walk? To be of one accord is to recognize and live in this covenantal connectedness that we share. Who are you investing in here? Who is hurting, who needs your support? Who has God brought to your attention for your sacrifice? How are we to be like Christ in our mindedness towards His body? Be ‘together in soul’.

Being of One Mind – The idea is that your focus together is upon the one great purpose. If you are imitating Christ, you are imitating His purpose. He came to do His Father’s work. We are to be about our Father’s business.

Promoting This Sort of Unity – What is required of us?

Unity, not Uniformity – We are not called to agree on every detail of life and thought all of the time. The scripture leads us in areas of liberty, love, and deference for others ideas and methods while instructing us also of times to divide (Gal 1:6-10, Titus 3:10). We are finite and we are fallible and we must extend patience towards one another in our sanctification. Details in raising children, lawful teaching methods, political involvements, health care decisions, views on historical events – these should not separate the body, and I have *our* body in mind. Where I am in real sin, you should come knocking on my door. Where there is a difference of opinion, you should mind your own business. And wisdom seeks to learn the distinctions in love.

Elders – Elders must rule wisely. Folly and rebellion in leadership will cause division. Shepherds must be men who love the sheep and long for unity more than their own comforts. Pray for the elders. Elders – beg for wisdom.

Members – Members must take seriously the call to submit to Christ and His Word in the context of being members of a body and not autonomous individuals. Your sweet personal quiet-time is not pleasing to God if you do not love the brethren.

Indifferent To The Church – The divisions and schisms in the church shame the name of Christ (1 Cor 1:10). Sin allowed defiles the temple (1 Cor 3:16-17). And bitterness, aloofness and indifference towards the body is a great sin (Eph 4:1-3). This is central to the life of the church. This is central to our life. Paul says to us, “make my joy complete”.

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