

Soul-Joined

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Date: 05 February 2023

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[0 : 00] We're four weeks into the book of Philippians, making pretty good progress. We're into chapter two, and we're just going to tackle four verses today. But then next week, our brother Ryan is going to serve us in preaching that next portion in Philippians chapter two, kind of the heart of Philippians chapter two, and really kind of the heart of the whole letter of Philippians. And it's a beautiful, wonderful portion of scripture. If you have opportunity this week, please take a look at it. If you happen to be looking for something to memorize, this would be a beautiful portion, starting in verse five. You can go down through maybe verse nine or even verse 11. Beautiful portion of scripture to commit to memory, focusing your attention on our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together, and then Corey will read our scripture this morning. Let's pray. Father, we are so grateful to be here, and we are humbled as we have sang together that Jesus paid it all. We confess again that we have no righteousness of our own.

our righteousness of our beautiful Savior, your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we just confess, and we do so freely and boldly and joyfully, that our righteousness is Christ. Christ, all that we have, we have from him. All that we need, we find in him. He is our satisfaction, our hope, our joy.

Father, thank you for the privilege of being reminded by worshiping together of this gospel in which we stand.

[2 : 08] And we do stand amazed in your presence as we consider our Savior Jesus. Father, as we turn our attention to your word, we want to say thank you for preserving this word for us.

We're so privileged to live in a time when we can have multiple copies of the Bible, a copy of the scripture on our phones readily available. We can have dozens of copies and different versions to refer to and to work with.

Father, you are so kind and so good to us. Please help us to be faithful stewards of these good gifts that you have given. Blessed Holy Spirit of God, would you please come now and help us as your word is opened.

Please help me as I preach to be clear and concise. Help me to be mindful and to be following, Holy Spirit, the things that you want to say to us today.

We really don't want to hear much at all of what I have to say, but we do want to hear from you.

Would you please help us so that as we hear your word, as we receive this preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, would you please help us to believe it and to respond by obeying it?

[3 : 32] We ask this for your glory, our God, and for our good and our joy in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Here's Philippians chapter 1, sorry, chapter 2 and verses 1 through 4.

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility. Count others more significant than yourself. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

I love to read. And I am learning to love to read out loud to my dear wife, Lois.

Do you know what I don't like when I read out loud? Out loud, run-on sentences in the book. And here's a little confession. Sometimes when I'm reading out loud to Lois, I notice that there's a run-on sentence, and I just auto-correct that in my head.

[4 : 57] I bring the sentence to an end, and I add the subject again so that it's clear and concise. Because here's the thing. Long sentences work well when you're reading them, but they tend to work less well when you're just hearing them.

When you read to yourself, we can make sense of longer sentences, because our brains are just amazing little computers, right? But when you're hearing the spoken word, we need some help. We need shorter sentences, and we need gaps in our sentences in order to help us connect the lines of thought. Everything that Corey just read to us is a single sentence in the original language. There is one main clause, and it's in verse 2, when Paul says, make my joy complete. But here's what I want you to notice.

This make my joy complete is not Paul's main concern. It is the main clause of this long run-on sentence, but it is not his main concern.

[6 : 10] Let me try to explain that. If I get in the car with Elam and Owen, and I say to Elam and Owen, it would make me really happy if you would buckle up your seatbelts so we can leave.

What's the main clause in that sentence? It would make me happy, right? But what's the main point in the sentence? Buckle up your seatbelts, isn't it?

That's the main point that I'm trying to get across. I want you to buckle your seatbelts so that we can get going, and when you do, that will make me happy. That's what Paul is doing here.

Paul's concern is not primarily for his joy. His concern is primarily for the Philippians' unity. Why is Paul concerned about the Philippians' unity?

Well, they are facing opposition, and they are facing adversity, and as a result of that, they are responding uniquely.

[7 : 23] Maybe you've noticed that human beings are not clones of one another. And so when we respond to circumstances, we do this based on the uniqueness of who we are.

And so that means we may respond to adversity or opposition or even a wonderful situation, like gathering together for worship as God's people.

We may respond to any of those various events based on what else is happening in our lives, whether we're grieving, whether we're stressed.

We may respond to those events based on whether we're already experiencing conflict in some other part of our life. We may respond based on how much sleep we've had recently, how hungry we are, whether we have a headache or a tummy ache or a toothache.

All of these things are going to impact the way that we respond, how spiritually and emotionally mature we are, what other experiences we have had in our lives.

[8 : 39] All of these, because we are not clones, are going to impact the way that we respond to adversity and opposition. And Paul understands this.

And so because we are not clones, our responses to circumstances are seeds of disagreement and dissension.

And if these seeds are allowed to sprout and to take root, disunity and division will be the rotten fruit.

And so Paul appeals to the Philippians and the Holy Spirit appeals to our hearts. Chapter 2, verse 2. Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

I am so glad that Paul doesn't say, can't you all just get along for a little while? You know? Can't you all just put a smile on your face for 75 minutes or so on Sunday morning and just tolerate one another for a bit?

[10 : 11] Can't you just grin and bear it during the midweek gathering when you gather together? Can't you just grin and bear it? Paul is not content with superficial relationships.

Do you see that here in the text? He wants something better for the Philippians than fake it until you make it. His exhortation is concerned with their minds.

His exhortation is concerned with their hearts. He expects them to engage in thoughtful, thoughtful consideration of one another.

Deliberate mindfulness of the events that are happening around them. Patient wisdom in the face of adversity and opposition and shared vision.

This is what Paul wants for them. I think we can all agree that this singularity of thought and purpose is scarce.

[11 : 13] And I wonder if I might try to illustrate why this is true. Imagine a brainstorming session. perhaps at work, maybe in planning some event that you've been part of.

And in this brainstorming session, everyone is supposed to share their ideas and bring their suggestions to the table, right?

So that we're just gathering and collecting ideas. What happens? Like if we could see little thought bubbles over the tops of the heads like in comics, over the tops of the heads of the people that are engaged in this brainstorming session, what do you think we might find there?

I suggested that six months ago and no one listened to my idea. I can't believe she's saying that again. Every time we get together, she says the exact same thing.

What is with her shirt anyway? He has really bad coffee breath today. She didn't seem to like my idea last time, so I'm definitely not supporting her idea this time.

[12:34] Who does that guy think he is? And why is he taking so long to get around to his point? Doesn't he know we have other things to do today? Someone better get me a Snickers because I'm about to get hangry.

right? It's not surprising to us that these responses are relatable, but it is surprising and discouraging, isn't it, when these types of mindsets and attitudes find their way into the church.

As citizens of heaven, we can enjoy this unity of mind that Paul has for the Philippians when we remember what Paul also writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, love is not rude.

Love is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and it does not keep a record of wrongs. Having this same love that Paul talks about means remembering that we are united in spirit.

United in spirit. This is an interesting little word, and I think it bears an illustration. I wonder if you are familiar with conjoined twins.

[13:59] Children, do you know what conjoined twins are? Okay, good. Some do and some don't, so let me explain it. Conjoined twins is when inside of the mom, the mother, who's going to have a baby, the twins are in there, and the two babies are born, and they are somehow physically connected to one another.

Maybe they share some organs, maybe they share some pelvic bones, and they're connected to one another when they come out of their mother.

This is conjoined twins. It's very rare. In Christ, we are connected with one another more intimately than conjoined twins who may share, for example, a stomach.

We are joined at the level of the spirit. We are soul-joined twins, if I can use that term.

It is as though our very souls are connected with one another. So, if we have this spiritual oneness, then why is unity so hard?

[15:24] If we have this soul-joined-ness between us, why is unity so hard among God's people?

God's will be faithful. And I believe the answer is because pride fertilizes the soil of every human heart.

Pride nourishes the seeds of disagreement and dissension. Pride stimulates those seeds to sprout, take root, and produce the rotten fruit of unity.

unity. But unity, did I say the rotten fruit of unity? The rotten fruit of disunity. Mike will have to correct that later.

Let me say that sentence again. Pride stimulates the seeds to sprout, take root, and produce the rotten fruit of disunity.

[16:25] But unity blossoms, hear this, when humility comes between us. How ironic.

When something comes between us, we find ourselves unified. Look at verse 3. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.

I wonder if this little phrase, selfish ambition, catches the Philippians' attention. This is not the first time that Paul has used this phrase.

Do you remember back in chapter 1 and verse 17? There were some who were preaching the gospel, and they had impure motives and malicious intent, and Paul says those preachers are selfishly ambitious.

Paul says to the Christians here in Philippi, don't act like those preachers. Don't act with selfish ambition.

[17:46] And then he adds, and don't be conceited. This is also an interesting little Greek word. It's two words put together, and it's the word for empty that maybe Ryan will teach us about more next week in the Greek.

It's the word for empty, and it's the word for honor or glory. So he says, don't act with selfish ambition, and don't act with empty honor, empty glory, kenodoxia, that's the Greek word.

Don't act in these ways. selfishness. Why does Paul use these two negatives? Why does he say, don't act with selfish ambition or conceit?

I think it's because we can fool one another into thinking that we are humble. Humility may really just be self-centeredness wearing a costume of self-denial.

it could look something like this. I don't like to clean floors at home.

[18 : 55] This is my least favorite chore of all of the chores. Mopping, sweeping, vacuuming, all of it. I don't like to do the floors. But let's just say I am vacuuming the floors.

And all the while, I am thinking thoughts like this. I can't believe that I have to do this. Don't they know this is my least favorite chore?

I would much prefer to do other chores. Why do I have to do this one? Vacuuming the floors is beneath me. This is the lowest job.

I have better and more important things to do. And then by the end, do you know what I'm thinking?

These are the cleanest these floors have been in a long time. What is happening here?

Like from the outside, I look very humble. But inside, there's a massive problem.

[20 : 04] From the outside, it looks like I am serving, humbly doing my fair share. nature. But the inside is just gross.

Maybe someone is willing to meet. Maybe they are happy to answer any questions you have. It appears humble on the outside. What is the motivation inside? I want you to like me.

I want you to see things my way. I want you to agree with me. I may seem humble from an outside perspective, but my motives are selfish and conceited.

I may look good on the outside, but on the inside, my heart stinks like burning sugar on the bottom of the oven.

Paul's concern is not superficial relationships between people. Paul is concerned about their hearts.

[21 : 11] And so he says, don't act with selfish ambition or conceit. Instead, notice it there in your Bible, do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit. Instead, in humility consider.

What is this? This is humble mindfulness that causes you to elevate others above yourself. In humility, consider others as more important.

Their perspective is more important. Their concerns and their questions more important. Her ideas and her suggestions more important.

Her time is more important. His emotions are more important. important. That family's needs more important than my own.

This is a heart-level change that the Holy Spirit has to work in us so that we have humble mindfulness about the needs of others and begin to elevate their needs, the needs of those around us, above our needs.

[22 : 33] Have you heard the phrase, you just need to believe the best? You just need to believe the best. I think this is probably not a bad practice in healthy relationships.

In healthy relationships. relationships. But I do worry that believing the best can be used to manipulate. See, if you come to me with some concern about my behavior, or you have some questions about the way that I responded to a situation or a circumstance, and you confront me in love about that and say, we need to talk about this, and I say to you, you're not believing the best about me.

what have I done? I just shut down the whole conversation, don't I? I just bring to an end any work that the Holy Spirit was going to do in my heart through you, my brother, my sister, it's all just gone. Because now the situation has been turned, and now suddenly the accusation is against you, and you're not believing the best. you can also see this if you might hear someone say, well, I'm just choosing not to ask questions.

I don't really want to get to the bottom of whatever it was that happened because I just want to believe the best about everyone who's involved. Well, that sounds good, but is that what Paul has in mind here?

[24 : 14] look at verse 4. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

What if instead of believing the best, we actually began to act in the best interests of others?

What if we humbly consider others so much more important than ourselves that we do what is best for them even if it's not what is best for me?

what if we ask questions like, what will maximize God's glory right now?

What can I do today to give her the best day possible? How can I encourage? What can I affirm?

[25 : 34] How can I move towards that person rather than staying at a distance? how can I motivate them to be more like Jesus? How can I be more like Jesus?

Sisters and brothers, did Jesus believe the best about us? Are we meant to imagine that, I mean, is this how we understand the gospel?

That Jesus looks down and thinks to himself, my, what a lovely group of people, I just love them so much. They are so lovely.

Or did Jesus rescue us when we were at our very worst? first. Jesus didn't believe the best about us.

The scripture records that Christ died for us while we were still sinning. See, Jesus wasn't selfishly concerned about acting in his own best interest.

[26 : 50] Jesus humbled himself in gracious consideration of your desperate need, and then acted lovingly and mercifully in your best interest, even though it cost him his life.

Do you believe this gospel? Do you believe this gospel of Jesus? That Jesus lived?

That Jesus died? That he suffered? For the sins of his people? That he came to us when we were most needy, most desperate, most broken, most sinful, and acted in our best interest?

The primary obstacle to Christian unity is not the presence of legitimate differences of opinion or doctrine or practice.

The primary obstacle to Christian unity is self-centeredness. And that obstacle is obliterated when the Spirit of God humbles our hearts so that we live like we really are soul joined with one another.

[28 : 29] And then we act with single minded purpose for God's glory in the best interests of others.

I wish that I could tell you that every opponent that we face is outside the church.

But sadly that is not true. Politics and posturing and power grabs are very real threats to Christian unity.

unity. But there is hope for us. Paul begins this run-on sentence with a passionate appeal to gospel hope.

And I saved it until the end because we need hope. Look at verse number one. If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the spirit, if any affection and mercy.

[29 : 47] Paul expects his hearers when they receive these punchy words, he expects them to be responding by nodding their heads in agreement or maybe throwing out an amen or a preach it preacher or a hallelujah or mm-hmm, something like that, right?

He's coming at them with these gospel truths, one right after another, and he is preaching to them. Aren't you experiencing comfort from your union with Jesus?

Aren't you being encouraged by the Father's love? Aren't you enjoying the fellowship that the Holy Spirit produces?

aren't you feeling compassion and mercy rising up inside of you for your brothers and sisters? Paul expects us to be thinking, I am receiving those things, I have received those things, God has been so good to me in this gospel of Jesus Christ, and then Paul throws it in, make my joy complete.

if you are receiving these wonderful gospel realities, then make my joy complete.

[31 : 14] Think the same way, have the same love, be united in spirit, be intent on one purpose. the seeds of dissension must not sprout from soil well fertilized by pride.

What beautiful irony, this unity that blossoms when humility comes between us. Ben Franklin said, we must all hang together, together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.

We may not agree on every nuance of every point of doctrine, perhaps we disagree on style of worship, maybe we don't see eye to eye about finances or politics, what if we have different opinions about some church ministry things, maybe your family runs at a different pace from my family, even if we had perfect agreement on all of these matters, it does not guarantee unity among us.

But, if we keep our eyes on Jesus, and if we remember that all those who have been born again are members of his body, and if we humbly consider others more important than ourselves, and seek God's best in the lives of each other, then we will prove the presence of Jesus among us, and we will enjoy the sweet fruit of soul-joined unity.

Should we pray about that together? together? Father, would you please send the Holy Spirit, even now, to move among us in the discrete ways where each of our hearts needs to be moved.

[33 : 28] Friends, perhaps you would take a minute and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart these truths that we have heard and learned together.

Perhaps the Holy Spirit speaks conviction, perhaps he brings comfort, perhaps he intends to challenge your heart, perhaps to move you to repentance.

Take a moment and let's allow the Holy Spirit to work among us. Father, your word says that you have searched us and known us, that you know our inward parts.

We're grateful for your word that divides even to the level of soul and spirit.

Father, we are grateful to be known by you and we are humbled once again to recall that we have been loved by our Savior Jesus while we were still so unlovely.

[34 : 52] Please forgive us in your rich mercy because of our Savior Jesus. For the ways that we have acted this week, even perhaps this day, in pride, we have allowed dissension and disagreement to find a place in our hearts.

Blessed Holy Spirit, would you please root this out? Dig out dissension from our hearts and grant us humility so that unity blossoms instead.

Thank you for the forgiveness that we have because of our Savior Jesus. Thank you that we can celebrate what Paul writes in Romans 8, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Jesus. And so we claim by your grace and by your mercy that place of being in the beloved, safe and secure, protected from all harm.

Would you please help us as we continue to reflect and think on these things and as we continue to move through our worship gathering? we need your help and we want to worship you well.

[36 : 19] It's in Jesus' name that we pray, giving thanks. Amen.