

**Joyful Gospel Teamwork Through Christlike Service**  
**Philippians 1:27 – 2:11**

I am pretty humbled this morning. As I continue in my series through Philippians, I will now be addressing the section of Philippians that is often spoken about as the most studied, dissected, and quoted sections of the scriptures. That is a bit intimidating. But I will dig into it with all of you and I am hoping my thoughts and words will be of service to you and help you grow in your faith in Jesus Christ.

Let Pray. (Holy Spirit help us now. I am just a simple man and I understand that, so Help us hear and understand what YOU oh Lord want us to hear and understand. Use my words to bless your name and help those who hear them bless your name as well – I ask for these blessings within the power of Jesus Christ – Amen.

Well Let's set the anchor – Open your bibles, please to Philippians 1, we will start at verse 27 of chapter 1 and we will end at verse 11 of chapter 2.

Please follow along with me. (the ESV)

*<sup>27</sup> Only let your manner of life be worthy<sup>[b]</sup> of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,<sup>28</sup> and NOT frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should NOT only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,<sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

***2** So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,<sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look NOT only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,<sup>[c]</sup> being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

I believe God inspired these words to teach us:

1. **Be a team because of opposition and suffering.** (1:27-30)
2. I believe God inspired these words because He knows **a team effort can bring JOY.** (2:1-2)
3. I believe God inspired these words because He knows the **ONLY WAY** we can have REAL success with JOYFUL UNITY, is to embrace **considering others as more important than ourselves.** (2:3-5)

4. I believe God inspired these words because **we desperately need a powerful reminder of what the Gospel actually is**, in order to fuel ultimate success as Christians. (2:6-8)
5. (last) I believe God inspired these words to **remind us that the obedience of Jesus purchased VICTORY.**

God has inspired Paul to provide powerful reminders and teachings on how to succeed as Christians. AND succeeding as Christians is NOT easy, it is a difficult task. Let us dig into what God has for us here, one point at a time. Point #1.

### **1. Be as team because of opposition and suffering. (1:27-30)**

As Paul, inspired by God, urged the Philippians to “live a worthy life” whether he was with them or not. He did so because of the very real opposition to the message of Jesus that was present in his day – and indeed it is present in our day as well. Paul experienced opposition to his preaching and ministry often, on each missionary journey Paul was opposed verbally, you can read about lots of that in Acts Chapter 13, and Paul was opposed physically, one of the most extreme was a stoning in **LIE-Struh** (Lystra) (Acts Chapter 14) where his lifeless body was dragged out of the city where he was left for dead. God did not let Paul die there – Paul got back up and kept on preaching. In Philippi he was thrown in prison (the details you can read in Acts 16) and this is what Paul is referring to in vs 30 when he writes “*engaged in the same conflict you saw I had and now hear I still have*”. Paul was again in prison, this time he was arrested by the Romans to keep the Jews from killing him in Jerusalem and Paul demanded to take his case to Caesar, (Acts 25:12). Paul was telling the Philippians to stay strong, by working together to spread the Gospel, despite the difficulties, like being thrown into prison, that come with telling others about Jesus. These oppositions, that were so common for Paul, are ALWAYS PRESENT for people who pursued spreading the Gospel. Opposition to the message of Jesus is part of the equation in this fallen world. Verses 28-29 clarify that we are called to face opposition without fear, to recognize that part of our Christian walk WILL ALWAYS include suffering for the sake of Christ. THIS IS what Paul intended as the meaning to “live a worthy life” – it was a call to the Philippians, and to us, to STRIVE in a unified effort to spread the message of Jesus in the face of difficulty and suffering. Let us do our best to use words and actions that bring the message of Jesus into play within our daily life. And let us do so as a team, standing firm together in one spirit, with one mindset, while striving side by side (vs27), without fear of the opposition and suffering that come (vs28-29). Which leads to point #2.

### **2. A team effort can bring JOY. (2:1-2)**

We get a list of very helpful attitudes to include in a TEAM effort here. Verses 1-2 of Chapter 2 - *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup>complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* As the Philippians worked to complete Paul’s JOY, they got JOY. If we work at these things – WE can experience JOY.

The Greek word for encouragement here, brings the meaning of “counseling” each other. So, we are to advise each other. Second, he urged them to “comfort (each other) with love” and the Greek word here for comfort reveals the meaning of consoling each other. Third, Paul urges God’s people to “participate”, a direct reminder to act together, not just talk together (do ministry Gospel work

together). Forth, Paul urges them to participate with each other within the “spirit” which is a direct reference to being in submission to the Holy Spirit. And Fifth, Paul finishes off his list with urging his friends in Philippi to work at having genuine affection and sympathy for each other. The Philippians, and all of us today, will find great blessing in striving to spread the Gospel, together, WITH advice for each other, WITH consolation to each other, and WITH genuine affection and sympathy (or compassion).

This list sounds great, what is not to like about Holy Spirit LED participation to encourage, comfort, and love each other with genuine affection and compassion? This is especially GREAT when we do not forget God’s reminder that suffering is part of our equation, we NEED to gift each other with these positives because we will all need help at times with the pain of opposition AND personal failures that come all throughout our lives.

But its time to get honest with ourselves – we do not do this well, this is not easy. We often give advice – but not loving, supportive, encouraging advice – its often critical and temperamental. We often give love but with conditions. I see this in myself and I see this within others. I (and others) GIVE love **only** when other people are acting the way we want them too. When they are disagreeable to us, we withhold our love. That is loving with conditions, and its not real love. And as for genuine affection and sympathy – I know it is awfully easy to have little affection or little sympathy for others who are experiencing difficulties in life, because, we can point out all the ways they have brought the difficulty on themselves! Chew on this for a second ... when we get into this mindset, when we hold back love, think about that .... and hear me in this, .....Jesus was fully aware of who was responsible for ALL the difficulties for ALL of humanity – throughout ALL of history, past present and future, and He didn’t let that truth stop Him from doing what was loving for YOU – why should you withhold that from anyone else? But I’m getting slightly ahead of myself, that’s point 4. The difficulty of applying this list of wonderful positives, that CAN produce JOY, – SUCCEEDS only with Point #3.

### **3. The ONLY way to succeed, consider others more important than you.**

*<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>[a]</sup>*

We are to put effort into doing this right. The first negative here is “Selfish Ambition”, which is often seen when others get involved in Christian efforts for their OWN gain - that is NOT what God wants. The next word is “conceit” – we are to do NOTHING in conceit. The Greek meaning of this word is derived from the idea of “VAIN GLORY”. Therefore, DO NOT fall into making Christian efforts that are about YOUR glory, but instead, work to glorify Jesus. Apply the opposite of selfishness - be humble – consider others more important than yourself. It would be nice if God was providing a template to follow that would make things EAISER with each step. **Quite the Opposite here.** God knows we need to work together as a TEAM to spread the Gospel because of the difficulties and suffering that ALWAYS come with this task. God knows the JOY that can be experienced within the difficulties. And God knows the only way JOY happens is when we think of others as more important than ourselves.

But thinking of others as more important than ourselves is A VERY HARD thing to do. In my experience, it is a rare thing – I don't do it often, I don't see this applied often, we do most of the things in life for ourselves. We take care of us first and look to others second. This "mindset for success" this mindset that is "ours in Christ Jesus" to consider others more important than ourselves is basically .....impossible. But I know we can improve! I know we can make Gaines to "Consider others more important..." – here's how!

Point #4.

**4. The ONLY way we will consider others more important, is to remember Jesus did that for us.**

*<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,<sup>[c]</sup> being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

I'm blown away at this, I hope you are too. JESUS, *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped!* HE IS GOD – but HE let go of ALL His power – HE let go of ALL His authority! HE let ALL the penalty for sin be poured out on HIMSELF – for us! That is how much God loves YOU, that is how much God LOVES! He IS LOVE (1JN4:8). AND THAT is considering others more important – that is selfless love. That's how you succeed at being a Christian! You imitate that, within submission to His Holy Spirit you Love UNCONDITIONALLY!

Like our hymn from earlier this morning, "How deep the Fathers Love for US, that HE should give His only Son – to make US His treasure...."

"wounds and opposition mar the chosen one" and pain and opposition WILL be present in our lives when we pursue spreading the Gospel, but His obedience "brings many sons to glory" and so can WE!

Every time we endure someone else's sin against us, every time we proclaim Him good in the midst of bad, every time we choose to obey Him instead of obeying what we want, what we FEEL is right – it's a win, it's a win because it produces GLORY for Jesus. Who loves us.

The resulting effect of us being MORE like Jesus BY considering others more important than ourselves BY LETTING GO of ANY aspect of OUR importance, LETTING GO OF OUR power OUR authority...that's a WIN. I am tremendously humbled and helped when I revisit a true story of someone who DID this. Someone who gave himself up COMPLETELY and THE result was POWERFUL, beyond human reasoning. This is a powerful example of John 12:24 where Jesus taught about HIS death and resurrection with these words "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*" I hope you are convicted and encouraged by this story...but I should say, a few of the details are graphic, perhaps a bit much for young ears....so parents...heads up!

**Ernest Gordon was a Scottish POW in World War II. He wrote *Miracle on the River Kwai* telling of his experiences at the hands of the Japanese as he and his fellow soldiers were forced to work on the Burma-Siam Railway.**

The cost to construct the Burma-Siam railway was astronomical (in terms of life). There were 393 fatalities for each mile of track laid, (258 miles, with over 100,000 deaths) as prisoners labored under inhumane conditions. Oppressive heat, tropical diseases, stinging insects, and inadequate food, clothing, and shelter...Many succumbed to the brutal environment.

Others, suspected of lagging, were bayoneted, or decapitated by sadistic guards. Gordon described these living conditions as a “descent into hell”, here are some of his journalled words:

*As conditions steadily worsened, as starvation, exhaustion and disease took an ever-growing toll, the atmosphere in which we lived was increasingly poisoned by selfishness, hatred, and fear. We were slipping rapidly down the scale of degradation. We lived by the rule of the jungle; survival of the fittest. It was a case of “I look out for myself and to hell with everyone else.” The weak were trampled underfoot, the sick ignored or resented, the dead forgotten. When a man lay dying, we had no word of mercy. When he cried for our help, we averted our heads. We had long since resigned ourselves to being derelicts. We were forsaken men, and now, even God had left us. Hate, for some, was the only motivation for living. We hated the Japanese. We would willingly have torn them limb from limb, flesh from flesh, had they fallen into our hands.*

What a horrible place to be. What a horrible mental and physical situation for anyone, of faith or not. But - one day, one shovel, and one man, changed everything. Gordon writes:

*At the end of each day the tools were collected from the work party. On one occasion a Japanese guard shouted that a shovel was missing and demanded to know which man had taken it. He began to rant and rave, working himself up into a paranoid fury and ordered whoever was guilty to step forward. No one moved. “All die! All die!” he shrieked, cocking and aiming his rifle at the prisoners. At that moment one man stepped forward. The guard clubbed him to death with his rifle while he remained obediently silent. When they returned to the camp, the tools were counted again and no shovel was missing.*

An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others. Word of this spread like wildfire through the whole camp. This one man’s selfless sacrifice revolutionized the camp’s atmosphere. Many sought out answers about how to prepare for death and be ready to meet God. Ernest Gordon became the unofficial camp chaplain. A small church was erected, and prayer was held nightly. “Faith,” Gordon said, “thrives when there is no hope but God.” God did not disappoint. (now get what happens NEXT – it goes beyond self-comfort of a savior....)

The men began to treat each other like brothers, with care and kindness. Gordon describes the effect:

*Death was still with us, BUT we were slowing being freed from its destructive grip. We were seeing for ourselves the sharp contrast between forces that made for life and those that made for death. Selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, greed, self-indulgence, laziness, and pride were anti-life. Love, heroism, self-sacrifice, sympathy, mercy, integrity and creative faith, were the essence of life, turning mere existence into living in the truest sense. These were gifts of God to men. There was still hatred, but there was also love. There was death, but there was also life. God had not left us. He was with us, calling us to live the divine life in fellowship.*

A ‘Jungle University’ sprung up. Prisoners of different backgrounds taught classes. Artist made materials and mounted an exhibition of their work. Musicians crafted instruments and held

recitals. Gardeners tended beds of medicinal plants. Prisoner on prisoner crime dropped dramatically. So complete was the transformation in some of the men that upon liberation they extended kindness, not revenge...

When the victorious Allies swept in, the skeletal survivors lined up in front of their captors. Instead of attacking ...them... they said: "No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness." Sacrificial love has transforming power. "...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

The impact of that unnamed man's sacrifice on the camp is a snapshot of the power of Christ's death to transform lives. It changes everything. We CAN focus on ETERNAL realities in spite of horrific, present-tense circumstances. Neither their status as prisoners nor their captors' attitude toward them changed, but the men were no longer the same. Salvation in Christ offers to all the same opportunity. 'In the world, but not of it,' we may rise victorious (like Christ) over the direst of circumstances.

Ernest Gordon became a Presbyterian pastor...he eventually moved to the United States where he became the dean of the chapel at Princeton University.

To be upfront about this story – I gained all of this information from an internet cite and the author of this information was Leon Stier, I changed the wording for this message and if your interested in the original, I provide the link in the manuscript of today's message @ eastlincolnalliance.com.

<https://emailmeditations.wordpress.com/2017/07/01/1542-the-missing-shovel/>

That is a powerful story. Whoever that man was, he was in a mindset that allowed him to embrace death for the life of others. That IS Jesus, and you are a child of His, through Faith. And, as a child of God you will receive eternal life, with Him, forever. Point #5

##### **5. No matter how hard this gets, remember, Jesus won – YOU'RE HIS, its ALL GAIN!**

<sup>9</sup>... God has highly exalted HIM, ... bestowed on HIM the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that... every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>...,every tongue confess ... Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

It's a win. If we die to ourselves and 1. Consider others more important and 2. Give up our importance (selfishness) for the service of others. Its all for gain. It may look like loss to this world. Dying for a shovel looks pretty foolish to those who don't believe they have eternal life provided to them. But for those of us who believe – we know that EVEN if we are asked to DIE to imitate the Love of Jesus - its all a WIN. I'm SOOOO NOT good at this. I CAN recognize some growth. I do love others more sacrificially with my life than I have in the past. But it is easy for me to recognize that most of my efforts in life are about my benefit and NOT to Honor and Glorify God by benefiting others. BUT, because I recognize some gains within myself and I have witnessed great gains made by others....we can be better!!! Let's strive to remember just how much HE loves us and use that to love others more. Its starts in the home, husbands and wives love each other sacrificially, let that love spill over to your children if you have them, parents love your children sacrificially, let that love spill over to the church, and families love those in the church sacrificially, and let that love as a church spill over into our community and let us love our community sacrificially.

And remember, in the end, EVERY soul WILL admit God is everything – that faith in Jesus, is THE only

way to receive eternal salvation. JESUS is IT – He won and those of faith benefit forever. (phil2:9-11)

He will not accept you if you do not accept Him. If you have not placed your faith in Jesus you need to do it as soon as possible. AND – you are to profess this acceptance to someone – Faith can start with a private conversation in your heart with God but if you have the opportunity and time to tell someone, you are told to do so - (Rom10:9) *“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, AND believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved”* 1Jn4:15 says *“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.”* THEREFORE, if something about this message has stirred you to recognize that Jesus is IT and that you have not accepted Him – If your recognizing that HE is THE way THE truth and THE life, and NO ONE comes to the Father without HIM (Jn14:6), then simply say Yes to HIM. Say Yes to Him becoming your Lord and Savior, enjoy our prayer together, and then go tell someone ASAP.