

Sunday, Nov.2, 2008
Living Hope EFC
Art Smith: pastor

Serving Christ – for the joy set before us!
Philippians: The Ultimate Example of Serving God.

Paul has several reasons for writing Philippians, but they all combine into one major theme: *What it looks like to serve Christ – with joy! In spite of personal circumstances.*

- The Greek word for “joy” is used 5 times, “rejoice” 11 times.
- Like Ephesians, Paul is writing Philippians *from prison!*

Looking at Paul's reasons for writing...

1 – Thanks for the memories and your support: 1:3-11.

Vs.3-6: I remember you with thanksgiving and prayer and great joy because of your partnership (κοινωνία) in the gospel – from the first – until now!

Q: What is Paul talking about?

(1) They have been personally committed to Christ, holding on to the truth of the Gospel, and telling others about Christ.

- **1:27-30; 2:14-16** - They served, even though they suffered.
- What a great encouragement to have others who are committed to Christ to the extent of serving when suffering!

Q: Have you thought about the fact that in almost every epistle/ city in the N.T. – the saints suffered for being Christians?

- **TODAY:** In most countries – Christians suffer!

(2) They had supported Paul financially in his ministry.

- **2:25; 4:10, 14-19**
- Ministry *always* costs...someone!
- Salvation is free to man, but it cost God/ Christ much!
- Mission work may be free to others, but someone must give support; churches, individuals. (In this way we all have a part)
- **Starting a new church in N. Ft. Collins – will cost us!**
- This is one of the main reasons God gives us wealth!

POINT: The Philippians were SERVING Christ with witness & wealth!

2 – Paul gives a personal update & missionary report:1:12-26

I rejoice because no matter where I am, what my circumstances, the Gospel continues to spread.

- **1:12-26; 2:17-18** –Life is a sacrifice; **3:7-14** – Paul had one goal!
- **Paul's whole existence was consumed & focused on getting the Gospel to as many people as humanly possible (Rom.1:16**
- No amount of suffering, even death, deterred him – **1:21,23.**
- **Life was about populating heaven.**
- Heaven controlled how he lived life on earth.

POINT: Paul SERVED Christ everywhere, without concern for self!

3 – His commendation of Timothy & Epaphroditus: 2:19-30.

TIMOTHY: 2:19-24.

Timothy stood out as a rare gem in a world of self-seekers!

- Timothy was with Paul at his first ministry in Philippi, Acts 16.
- Q: Do you have a Timothy you're building into? Someone you can pass the ministry baton to?
- Servants/ disciples take time. He's been with Paul 10 years.
- Timothy was like a son, yet Paul mentored then sent him out.

POINT: Timothy SERVED Christ with genuine concern for *others*.

EPAPHRODITUS: 2:25-30.

He willingly served this *imprisoned* missionary...**before Paul was a star!** Paul was an "inmate!" How many help in times of freedom

- He served at the peril of his own health and life.
- Here was exemplary Christian (missionary) service! – 2:29*

POINT: Epaphroditus served by carrying \$ to Paul, the inmate!

4 – Paul warned the church about false teachers: 3:1-6.

5 – He exhorted them to help with bickering women: 4:2-8.

6 – Christ: the ultimate example of *missionary service*: 2:5-13

This is the model & example every Christian is to follow.

(1) Selfless thinking of others –Vs.5-6. (Living Example of vs.3-4.)

V.5 – Have this mind/ attitude in you (plural) = everyone.

V.6 – Christ existed in the very essence as God –but was willing to set aside His *personal interests*, His self-willed use of deity, *His display of glory and splendor* – to serve God's purposes (man).

- While becoming man, He never ceased being God!

Μορφή: "form." **The outward display of the inner reality or nature.** The outward display of deity, divine essence.

- His preincarnate state, eternity past = Jesus was God!
- John 1:1-4; Col.1:15; Heb.1:1-3, 8-9.
- It has nothing to do with shape or size, hands, eyes, etc.
- **In eternity past – Christ reigned over the universe, heaven.**

Q: What do you give to the person who has everything?

- POINT: Jesus needed nothing, but selflessly thought of us.

"Did not consider equality in the Godhead something to be grasped;" something selfishly (*greedily*) held on to for Himself.

Instead – **He thought of others!**

- His outlook was that of unselfish concern for others.

- His "**mind**:" = "I cannot keep my *privileges* for myself, I must use them for others; and to do this I will gladly lay them aside and pay whatever price is necessary." WW – 74.

ILLUS: A reporter was interviewing a **successful job counselor** who had placed hundreds of workers in their vocations quiet happily. When asked the secret of his success, the man replied:

'If you want to find out what a worker is really like, don't give him responsibilities- give him privileges.

- Most people can handle resp'ies if you pay them enough, but it takes a real leader to handle privileges.
- **A leader will use privileges to help others** and build the organization; a lesser man will use privileges to promote himself.' (ww. 74)

POINT: Jesus SERVED God by selflessly using His privilege to help us

It is helpful to contrast Satan/ Lucifer & Adam – with Christ.

Isaiah 14:12-15

Satan

Created by God
Highest of angels
"I will ascend!"
Rebelled, pride.
Self exalted
Brought sin
Condemned

Adam

Created by God
Created in God's image
"You will be like God."
Rebelled, pride.
Self seeking
Brought death
Cursed

Christ

Creator of both
Was God
Became *man*.
Humbled Himself.
Thought of *others*
Died, to give life
Exalted

Q: For whom are we using our privileges?

What amount of discomfort are we willing for – to benefit others?

(2) V.7 – Jesus chose to be a servant.

"Thinking of others in the abstract sense only, is insufficient; we must get down to the nitty gritty of true service." - ww.74

G.K.Chesterton said the problem with Christianity is not that it has been tried and found wanting but that it has been found difficult and left *untried*. – *Deliver us from Evil*, 163

A businessman once asked Lorne Sanny, then president of the Navigators, how he could know when he had a servant's attitude. The answer, "By how you act when you are treated like one." - Green 329

"Emptied:" "Does not mean He emptied Himself of His deity, but rather He emptied Himself of the display of His deity for personal gain. It signifies the completeness of His self-renunciation and refusal to use what He had to His own advantage." – R & R 550

Μορφή δουλῶν λαβῶν: He became a true (inward nature & outward display) of a servant. What did this entail?

- He became a "man" *permanently!* –V.7
- He used His body to serve God's will.

- He gave up everything – including His right to live.
- HE did not *pretend* to be a servant, He really was! **Mt.20:28**

(3) Jesus was willing to BE a Sacrifice for the good of others – Vs.8

We tend to be willing to “serve,” as long as we can define what “serving” we will do. Not too much discomfort.

Dr. J. H Jowett said, “Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.”

Douglas Hyde in *Dedication and Leadership* explained, “The willingness to sacrifice was one of the most important factors in the success of the Communist program.” – ww.75

By the way, do you ever remember Jesus saying...“*And don’t forget all I’ve done for you?* I came to this earth, put up with sinners, never gave into temptation, fed ___people, healed___ people, missed ___ hours sleep &, ___ meals, slept on the ground___ times, prayed ___ hours, suffered_____ hours...

NO. “*When love is the motive, sacrifice is never measured or mentioned. The person who constantly talks about the sacrifices does not have the submissive mind of Christ.*” – ww, 76

(4) Exaltation follows sacrificial service – Vs.9-11.

- 1 Pet.5:6 “Humble yourself under the might hand of God...”
- Phil.1:6, 21; 2:15-16; 3:20; 4:3.
- For the joy set before Him He endured the cross.
- Here is the epitome of “Christian (missionary) service & joy!”

“He is no fool who give up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose,” Nate Saint

We will never lack reward for serving Christ.

God will never be indebted to us. He is a rich rewarder of all who seek and serve Him! We have no idea....

There is only one path to true servanthood.

Mark 8:34-36

34 "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?

Joy – comes from giving/ serving, not being served!
Christ believed it so! Do we?