

Philippians 2:1-11, Make my joy complete

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Preacher: Steve Palframan

[0 : 0 0] great so we're in philippians chapter 2 and verses 1 to 11 let me pray and then i will read the passage for us let me pray uh loving father we want to just ask now for your um particular help as we look at this section of your words and lord we want to ask that you might give us the concentration that we need we want to pray that we might uh not just learn stuff with our minds but that we might be moved in our hearts to love and trust you say lord we pray that you might impress upon us the great humility of the lord jesus that we might bow the knee to him and give him all the glory in jesus name amen okay so i'm in philippians chapter 2 i'm going to read to you verses 1 to 11 and then we're going to think about it together it's on page 1179 but most of you like you're there already anyway philippians chapter 2 therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with christ if any comfort from his love if any common sharing in the spirit if any tenderness and compassion then make my joy complete by being like-minded having the same love being one in spirit and of one mind do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit rather in humility value others above yourselves not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as christ jesus who being in very nature god did not consider equality with god something to be used to his own advantage rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross therefore god exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue acknowledge that jesus christ is lord to the glory of god the father now i think those verses are probably so familiar and so brilliant that really i feel like i should perhaps just read them through a few times and then sit down and shut up if you are in any way minded to commit verses of the bible to memory you could do a lot worse than memorizing these verses especially verses 6 to 11 as a really central and important part of the new testament theology of who jesus is anyway but i'm not going to just read them and sit down and shut up i have got some more things to say as we try and have a look through and see what the lord is saying to us tonight but to try and keep your interest on a sunday evening i am going to point out three surprises in the verses three surprises the first one is this depending on exactly how you read it i think there is only one instruction here so you have the passage printed out in the front of your handout i would like you to circle the instruction what is the instruction in these verses have a think about that maybe on your own you can cheat and talk to the person next to you if you'd like to and circle what is the imperative or the instruction that do this in these verses there is one possibly two depending on how you break it down or which exact greek text you choose to use letters yes you you you This is like exam conditions.

I'm liking this. I think I might pace up and down just to make you feel all nervous. So, yes. I think it's my dream of a sort of teaching. Even if you want to. But that's my assumption. There's more than that. Oh. It's pretty English. I'm trying to understand. I guess it's not.

[5 : 5 4] I guess it's not. Okay. Now, it is possible that one of the imperatives is in verse five.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. We're going to deal with that in a moment. But there is one more in verses one to four. One imperative.

What is the imperative? The instruction in verses one to four. It's only one. Yes.

Make my joy complete. That's the imperative. That's the instruction. That's the request. I think it's surprising that, right?

But this is Paul's emphasis. Everything else around it essentially is a description of the actions that that would require. So things required to make Paul's joy complete, which is the instruction.

[7 : 02] And it's arranged in fours. Okay. There are groups of four around that imperative. So he starts, doesn't he? If you have any.

And he starts with encouragement from being united with Christ. That's the first one. If any. Second one. Comfort from his love. If any. Third one. Common sharing in the spirit.

Fourth one. If any. Tenderness and compassion. And of course, the answer to all of those is, yeah, of course I have that. Of course, I have encouragement from being united with Christ. That there is great encouragement in being united with Christ.

If I have any comfort from his love. If I have any comfort from his love. Of course, the love of Christ is of great comfort to me. I am hugely comforted by the love of Christ. If we share in the common spirit.

Common sharing in the spirit. Of course. Because believers are recipients of the Holy Spirit. If any. Tenderness and compassion. Of course, we are tender and compassionate towards one another.

[8 : 03] If that's the case, well then, make my joy complete. And afterwards, the descriptions of what filling that command looks like. So continue. By. So how do I make the joy complete? Well, by being like-minded.

Number one. Number two. By having the same love. Number three. By being one in spirit. And fourthly, by being of one mind.

Okay. So there's four more. Four at the beginning. Then the instruction. Four at the end. And then, four more descriptions of that. With the sort of negative connotations included. Nothing out of selfish ambition.

Nothing out of vain conceit. In humility, valuing others above yourself. Not looking to your own interest, but to the interest of others. Four more there. So here's the instruction from Paul.

Essentially, and I don't want to oversimplify it. But it is essentially, make me happy. Or make me full of joy. By enjoying and building Christian community.

[9 : 04] That's what he's saying. There's, I suppose, more to it than that. But that's the distilled essence of it. Paul literally wants to be filled up with joy. Full to the measure of joy.

By seeing the Philippians pulling together. In a way that reflects the gospel that's at work in them. Now I think, I think when you get that. That's a massive surprise. Why is Paul so obsessed with his own joy.

That he makes this the central instruction of verses one to four. Turn to the person next to you. Why is it that Paul is so obsessed with his own joy. That he makes that the central instruction in these verses.

Have a think. With the person next to you if you want to. And then I'm going to ask you to answer. And then I'm going to ask you to answer. And then I'm going to ask you to answer. You okay.

To, can I say. I'd like the. You better. Thank you.

[10 : 39] Thank you.

Thank you. Or make the Lord's joy complete, if you can do such a thing, because the Lord is as joyful as it's possible to be joyful. Why his joy? Any suggestions?

what have you been talking about Nick what did you think we were just saying that Paul's joy is in Christ has given him a mission Christ has sent him out and he's absolutely Gentile he's out to let people know about Christ and for everyone that turns to Christ it's like it's a wonderful thing and he's sharing God's joy so people like Paul's joy is God's joy people get saved and grown it's kind of the same yeah so Paul has joy in them growing in the faith just in the same way as that is joyful for the Lord to see the outworking of the work of Christ on the cross yes there is a particular sense though in which I think he seems to be suggesting that the sort of the underlying little niggles in Philippi

Philippi like Iodia and Syntyche sort of not getting on with each other or this selfish ambition of the preachers in verse 15 of chapter 1 is in some sense making Paul's joy incomplete now I think the answer probably the most helpful way to look come at the answer is in chapter 4 verse 1 where he mentions joy there so chapter 4 verse 1 just turn over the page to it he says this that there is a link between their godliness and Paul's joy because he says chapter 4 verse 1 therefore my brothers and sisters you whom I love and long for my joy and my crown stand firm in the Lord in this way dear friends it seems doesn't it in chapter 4 verse 1 that the perseverance of the Philippians is somehow connected to the crown and reward that Paul is looking forward to on the day of Christ Paul is anticipating that on the day of Christ Jesus his joy on that day is not just in one sense a joy in the Lord although it will be but it's a joy that comes from seeing others there on that day whom he had a part in ministering to they are his crown and his joy look at what the gospel did in their lives and I got to be part of sharing it with them now if that's right then the instruction in chapter 2 verse 2 becomes something like make my joy complete is something like live in the light of Christ's return isn't it my joy is linked to your perseverance

I get joy from seeing you persevering in the Christian faith until the return of the Lord Jesus so it is look forward to and long for that day remember that Christ is coming again and all this petty squabbling and all this selfish ambition is a total waste of time remember where my joy is Philippians don't go robbing me of joy on that day by your petty arguments on this day live for the return of the Lord by living out the unity you've been given in Jesus Christ letting that flow into love and one spiritedness one mindedness as you look out to the interests of others counting others above yourself I don't know whether I've used this before but Rico Tice who wrote the Christianity Explored course has an illustration about living in London but having a flat in wait living in Paris but having a home in London have you heard this story before have I told you this before no okay well let me use it again because it's quite helpful here Rico Tice says this he says imagine that your home is in London but you are sent with work to Paris and in Paris you get given an apartment that you are allowed to live in for your time in Paris but home is still back in London okay and you are paid a salary in Paris and you're allowed to spend that salary in whatever way you choose to you know you're supposed to provide for your needs from that but there is one rule anything that you buy for your apartment in Paris you cannot take from Paris it has to remain there but it is possible for you to wire money forward to London so that you can have it there when you finally arrive back home in London and you can enjoy it there and Rico's question to you then is okay if that's if that's the scenario that you're working in what do you do with your money what does your apartment look like in Paris do you fill it full right to the brim with all sorts of different trinkets and furnitures well no of course you don't do you what you do is you live as simply as you possibly can in order to send as much money forward as you can so that you can enjoy it when you arrive home in London and he says in one sense that's that's kind of Christian living we are living here temporarily but it is possible says Paul and it's not treasure here is it it's joy here it is possible if you like for us to wire joy forwards for that day by Christian perseverance on this day so why would you indulge so much in trying to be right now in an argument or a discussion and that sort of thing with one another squabbling with one another in Philippians when that robs you of sending joy forwards for the day of the Lord Jesus that's I think

[17 : 08] Paul's assumption here that it is this sense of living in the light of Christ's return the future joy that means that present squabbles are not really worth having and you can kind of see how that works can't you yeah I remember maybe this is too much for admission but I'll go for it anyway I remember when Vanessa and I were first married we were we were having an argument it was a very rare occasion but we were having an argument we lived in a small flat in Sheffield which it was like the bishop's old house in Sheffield had been turned into apartments and I think they'd just like put paper between the apartments it wasn't you know you could hear everything right and so we were having this argument and then someone just started banging on the wall to tell us to shut up and and then all of a sudden we just started laughing and we couldn't even remember what we were arguing about but that's that's the sense here isn't it that there's a sort of there's a pettiness to selfish ambition which forgets that there's a day coming a day of future joy when we'll stand before the Lord when actually that that idea that you were making a name for yourself in the church will seem to be so pathetic and silly why were you so bothered about that there's a day of future joy why are you so bothered about being right in that discussion with other euodia and syndicate because there's a there's a day of future joy and that will you won't be bothered there'll be a banging on the wall and you'll forget what you were arguing about and that's the sense here okay so just in your pairs

I think I put one question for discussion there what would it look like for you to pay joy forwards what would it look like for you to pay joy forwards have I written that on your invest in future joy have a talk with the person next to you about that did anyone have a really helpful answer that they want to share no just a no come on Florence yes yes so there are issues that become a priority in this life which they probably shouldn't be in the light of the future we can be obsessed with present blessing rather than future blessing yeah yeah yeah there's a there's a really helpful Puritan prayer that um that gave something like this we uh we hasten to a day where it will be immaterial whether we were rich or poor happy or sad and you know there's that it's that sense isn't there we are we are running towards a day where actually much of what we worry about today will be completely immaterial and so we live in the light of that day we make our joy complete we make Paul's joy complete we make one another's joy complete by living in the light of Christ's return yes there are things concerning us but if the Lord took us tonight we'd be yes why would we say worried about it yeah great

Christian second surprise okay we're going to move a little bit more quickly uh Christian community starts with Christ-like thinking I am told because I'm not really very good at this anyway but verse 5 is quite difficult to translate and there are a couple of different Greek possibilities in terms of background text as well so the question is whether it's really a command or it's passive so the NIV translation is really a paraphrase of what's there in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus the ESV if you have one of those translates it have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus and that sort of captures the spread of the possibilities either this is an imperative you have the same mindset as Christ Jesus you know make sure you have that or have this mind it's yours in Christ Jesus so live it out now you can read any number of commentaries which will tell you any number of things about that but basically it comes down to this

I guess in a sense is that Christ Jesus thought in this way you also should think in that way and it's right to say isn't it that as we become Christians we are given the mind of Christ we by the spirit of God we think like the Lord Jesus we are being transformed into his likeness to think like him so that's also true but it's also true that we should strain every effort to think like Christ so I don't think there's any great battle to have in the translation of verse 5 particularly but the idea is that Christian living starts with Christ-like thinking Christian living starts with Christ-like thinking and the community the Christian community which Paul is so eager to see formed is a function of how they think before it's a function of what they do and what then is that thinking well it's outlined in the verses that follow in verses 6 to 8 Christ Jesus who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage he's not making himself less than God he is in very nature

God but he is not using his divinity to overcome the weakness of human flesh which he is taking on to himself instead verse 7 he is making himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness Jesus takes to himself full humanity even as he is in very nature God he becomes human being made in human likeness and then being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross it's the steps down isn't it from the from the glories of heaven to the weakness of human flesh to the humble status of a servant to the service of death on a cross for the sake of others now again I don't want to do all the talking this evening so I just wonder whether you could think of a way that you might describe Jesus' thinking if you could encapsulate

[23 : 24] Jesus' thinking in verses 6 to 8 how would you encapsulate it what would you describe Jesus' thinking as in verses 6 to 8 and then what would it mean for you to think the same way okay how would you encapsulate Jesus' thinking how would you describe Jesus' thinking in verses 6 to 8 what would it mean to think the same way have a think about that just for a moment because we're going to okay how would you how would you describe Jesus' thinking what's Jesus' mindset in verses 6 to 8 anybody so he's thinking of humanity he's thinking of people yeah and not using his divinity as a reason not to serve humanity in the way that they needed yeah he's not like he's not going I'm above this right these guys are messed up right what am I doing here these guys are these guys are not worthy of my service

I am leaving them alone he's not thinking like that at all is he he's he's giving himself up yeah thanks Claire others I feel like Liz is on the cusp of a thought but it's I just think somewhere there was because there's another scripture there was joy in actually doing this this because we're human beings we wouldn't naturally want to leave our status and to become nobody yet Jesus was willingly doing that so he must have thought they're worth it you know it's in another reason yeah yeah yeah this is Hebrews 12 2 isn't it he for the joy that was set before him endured the cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God consider him who endured such opposition from sinners that you will not grow weary and lose heart yeah the joy set before him yeah so what do you think it would look like for us to think in the same way

I think I've before I summarized it like this I think at Redeemer yesterday and I think I did this before for us that this is self-sacrificial service for the eternal well-being of others to the glory of God right that's that's what's going on here what would it mean for us to think that same way so at least had a good phrase which she's borrowed from a book that she's read go on yes not to think less of yourself but to think of yourself less yeah it's not like a continual putting down of yourself but just not actually thinking of yourself in those situations yeah that's a Tim Kellerism it's helpful yeah yes there is we should be willing to consider whatever it is that we're asked to do by the

Lord however humbling it is yeah because actually if these verses are right then it's it's okay for us to be asked to do big things and significantly humbling things and to lose things that are precious to us for the sake of other people's eternal well-being it's okay yeah I think that's what you're saying isn't it's okay for God to ask you to lay that down for the eternal well-being of somebody else yeah it's profoundly challenging isn't it profoundly challenging Vanessa are you going to say something or we just yes yes so it is a concern for the glory of God over and above it is for the pat on the back of people yeah yeah yeah okay let's just move on and do the third thing the third and final surprise is that humility is divine greatness and maybe this isn't a surprise because I think we're perhaps so used to it but the therefore in verse nine is supposed to come

I think as a surprise or a shock that it is as God sees the humility of the son in human flesh that he exalts him to the highest place I think literally the word there is is hyper exalt or super exalts him that we've got to be careful haven't we the son is eternally divine verse six he is in very nature God has been and continues to be in very nature God this is not the elevation of the son to a status that he did not have before in eternity past God the son was and is divine rather this seems to be related to the humanity of Jesus Christ the God man Christ Jesus it is God the son in flesh that is super exalted he is given the name that is above every name he is the king Jesus is Lord it's the summary of the gospel isn't it he is Lord the ruler over God's people he is the fulfillment of all the kingship in the old testament that we've been looking at on Sunday mornings he is the head over

[28 : 51] God's people he is the new Adam the new head of humanity so that God the father looks on Jesus and says yes amen that is my divine eternal son in human flesh who has accomplished all that we laid before him his humility has exposed his divine DNA if you like Jesus Jesus has exposed God and made him known in his humility now creation will worship Jesus because in Jesus we see the divine rule and reign of God so that God the father is glorified by Jesus being worshipped and submitted to how is the father glorified by Jesus being worshipped well because Jesus being worshipped is the exposure of divinity because you see in Christ what it is to be God and so God is glorified I don't know whether can you remember those magic eye pictures you know when you there was like a phase at Christmas when there were all the rage when you hold them up to your eyes and then you move them away and all of a sudden the image pops out or if you're like me you do that for ages and nothing happens at all

I think you have to be slightly cross-eyed to see it does anyone know what I'm talking about Florence you have no idea she's too young Florence I know what I'm getting you for Christmas right a magic eye picture magic eye picture so it is I mean this is maybe a slightly silly illustration but it is as if Jesus as you as you hold him up to your face as you see Jesus in his humility on the cross out pops the glory of God the divinity this is God in flesh this is what God looks like this humility is the exposure of God's greatness and his majesty and his glory that we may worship him as king of kings and lord of lords every knee bowing every tongue acknowledging that Jesus Christ is lord to the glory of God the father and that second half from verse nine down to verse eleven picks up old testament images of God and his greatness and applies them to

Jesus in his humanity which is a remarkable thing for Paul to do so let me just end with this and we can talk about this in our groups just before we finish how is the humble greatness of Jesus good news for us as we seek to live like him this is meant I think to be an inspiration for us to have this mindset that Christ Jesus has so how is this humble greatness of Jesus good news for us as we try and live for him how I think about that anyone want to share their answer or the answer of the person they were talking with say Jesus in his humble greatness demonstrates to us and shows us what God is like and gives us something that we could never earn right he gives us salvation a place in glory forgiveness of sins new life by the spirit a hope of future glory so he gives us that and that makes us want to serve others in humble sacrificial service for their eternal well-being but if we do that we will be empty so where are we going to go we're going to go to the saviour who humbly serves us for giving us what we can't earn ourselves in his humble sacrifice for us and as we see and experience that it makes us want to humbly serve others even more but where are we going to go for the resources to do that we're going to come back to

Christ who humbly serves us which sends us round and round and round looking perpetual motion as we live for Christ and his glory it's brilliant news isn't it it's brilliant news because Jesus it's easy I think for people in the world to ask you to give up stuff and ask you to be humble and say that you should be self-effacing but where is the power and the strength going to come from to do that it has no power or strength to do that actually our power and strength to humbly give ourselves up for the eternal well-being of others comes from the fact that at the centre of our story is God himself in human flesh humbly serving us that we might be saved and therefore we go and pass that on to others let me pray and then we'll sing to play heavenly father how we thank you for Jesus thank you for his humble greatness thank you that he made himself nothing he took the very nature of a servant and was made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself becoming obedient to death even death on a cross that we might be saved oh lord what a great delight what great joy for us we pray please that you might help us with like minds to serve others that they too might enjoy what we enjoy in the lord

Jesus and we pray lord that we might do that like Christ for your glory in Jesus name amen amen