

The Joy of Christ-like Living

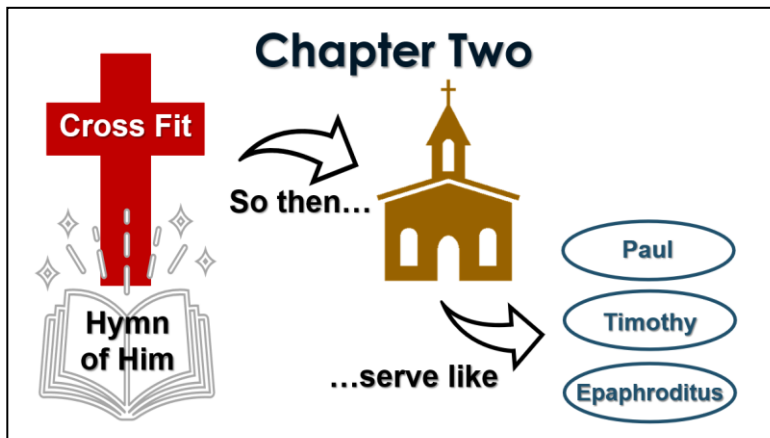
Philippians 2:1-11



“Your new birth puts God into action in you. It lets all of God loose, clothed with the redeemed humanity of your own flesh and blood as a forgiven sinner, so that at last you become a normal human being as Jesus was.”

(The Indwelling Life of Christ, Major Ian Thomas, Multnomah Books, 2006, 26)

For you and I to live like a “normal human being as Jesus was” is the focus of our message today! We continue our series, “**Joy for the Journey**”, studying Paul’s thank you letter to the Philippian church. In chapter one, we considered the joy of **partnering**, **growing**, and **proclaiming** the Gospel. Today, our theme today is the **joy of Christ-like living**. When the life of Jesus lives through us, there will be great joy. In Philippians 1:21, Paul exclaimed, “*For me to live is Christ!*” Consider **chapter two charted...**



Today, we will focus on the first two sections. If we are not “cross fit” as outlined in the hymn about Jesus, our activity meant to emulate Him is but a morass of moralistic futility. In the balance of the chapter, Paul outlines how we serve like Jesus, made possible by the life of Jesus. Let’s read [Philippians 2:1-11](#) in which Paul urges Christians to live just as Jesus did by adopting three graces.

[1] The attitude of Christ – vv. 1-2

Paul’s premise is in verse 1. He offers four factors foundational to living like Jesus. “If therefore” is...

- *Encouragement in Christ*
- *Consolation or comfort of love (“incentive” in the RSV)*
- *Fellowship in the Spirit (“partnership” as in 1:5)*
- *Affection (as in 1:8) and compassion – [lit.] “bowels and mercies”*

The “then” follows in verse 2. Paul urged conformity to Christ in relation to one another. “*Make my joy [lit.] fully filled up*” is his plea. What follows is a list of deliberate and intentional steps to congregational harmony. To properly obey these steps requires that one “*have this attitude*” which was in Christ (v.5).

- *Same mind – having a unity of thinking and values*
- *Same love – like the “affection of Christ Jesus” (1:8)*
- *Same spirit – harmoniousness, a oneness of soul*
- *Same purpose – having the same intention and objective*

Jesus was one-minded with His Father (see John 8:28). In turn, believers must be one in their thinking with Jesus. Evidently there was disunity in the Philippian church family (see 4:2). One-mindedness is not merely about the sameness of style or preferences. Rather, it is a foundational unity.

The Great Bridge by David McCullough (Simon & Schuster, 1972) tells the story of the Brooklyn Bridge in New York. In June 1872, when people thought there was no progress, the Chief Engineer wrote, *“the amount of the masonry and concrete laid on that foundation during the past winter, under water, is equal in quantity to the entire masonry of the Brooklyn tower visible today above the water line.”*



The Brooklyn Bridge remains a major transportation artery in New York City today because, over a century ago, the construction team did their most patient and daring work where no one could see it: on the foundations of the towers below the water line. When foundational unity exists in the Body of Christ, there is much joy and encouragement.

[2] The actions of Christ – vv. 3-8



Richard Foster makes a powerful observation about serving: *“Most of us know we will never be the greatest; just don’t let us be the least.”* (***Celebration of Discipline***, Harper & Row, 1988, 128) But Jesus was selfless in his actions, like a bond servant which was the common slave of Paul’s time.

a. Christ’s actions commanded – vv. 3-4

First, we must act without **selfish motive** – “rivalry/selfishness” (ἐριθειαν) or “vain conceit” (κενοδοξίαν). The caution is in reference of those who gain political office by devious means. Instead, we are to recognize our own insufficiency by regarding one another as more important than ourselves.

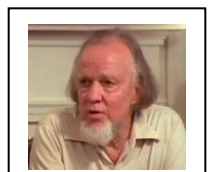
Second, we must act without **selfish interests**. This is hard for modern individualists! The famous psychiatrist Dr. Karl Menninger was asked what he would do if he knew he would have a mental breakdown. He replied, *“I’d go and find someone in worse condition than myself and try to help him.”*

b. Christ’s actions celebrated – vv. 5-8

Christ’s servanthood was modeled for us in the Gospels (see Matthew 20:2). In Philippians 2:5-11 we have recorded for us a 1st Century Christological hymn, which extols the loving actions of Jesus.

- He **relinquished** (v.6) in which He laid aside divine prerogatives, not “grasping” them
- He **emptied** (v.7) Himself by setting aside the full display and glory of His deity.
- He **humbled** (v.8) Himself and became a servant, even “obedient” to ultimate sacrifice.

The Swiss philosopher and author Francis Schaeffer wrote, *“As Christ’s rejection and death are the first steps in the order of redemption, so our rejection and death to things and self are the first steps in the order of true and growing spirituality.”* (***True Spirituality***, Tyndale, 1971, 26)

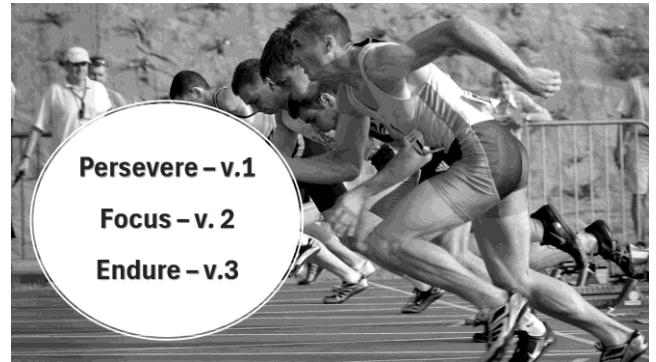


[3] The aspiration of Christ – vv. 9-11

What did Jesus aspire to accomplish? He lived to fulfill the will of the Father! Perhaps the greatest picture of submission is Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane where we get a glimpse of what was it like for Him to submit to His soon coming crucifixion (see Luke 22:42-44).

In our text Paul explained that there is great blessing in store for the one who will submit to God's purposes. Jesus completely gave Himself over to God's redemptive plan, regardless of the pain and humiliation it cost.

As a result, Jesus is now **highly exalted** (υπερυψωσεν v.9). He deserves **all honor** (v.10) and **worship** (v.11). Consequently, one day all people will acknowledge Christ's Lordship. What should be the aspiration of the believer? As we read in [Hebrews 12:1-3](#) we must run the race that Jesus has. He ran "for the joy set before Him" (v.2) and so should we. There is great reward in store for believers who will do three things...



Conclusion

Is it really possible to think, to function, and to strive as Jesus did? Is this attainable? We are assured in [II Timothy 2:11-13](#) that God will be faithful to work in our lives, as we allow and invite Him to do so!

Therefore, if any human being is truly normal in his or her behavior, there is only One Person to be congratulated, and that is God Himself. Normality for a human being is when God can be seen by anything and everything which that person does and says and is. (Thomas, 18)

Philippians 2:5-11 is a Christo-centric song – it matters what we sing! Christ's victory over sin assures us that His power will operate in our lives. Let's listen to today's benediction. It is an aspirational hymn to live and love like Jesus: [May The Mind Of Christ My Saviour](#) (Kate Barclay Wilkinson, 1925).

*May the mind of Christ, my Savior, live in me from day to day,
by His love and pow'r controlling all I do and say.*

*May the word of God dwell richly in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph only through His pow'r.*

*May the peace of God my Father rule my life in everything,
that I may be calm to comfort sick and sorrowing.*

*May the love of Jesus fill me as the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing: this is victory.*

*May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus as I onward go.*

*May His beauty rest upon me as I seek the lost to win,
and may they forget the channel, seeing only Him.*

Remember to check out worship songs of joy – see "[Paul's Picks](#)"