

Digging Deeper: Philippians – “Of The Same Mind” Jack Wilkie

In a culture that boldly teaches the “all about me” lifestyle, it’s helpful to look back to the Biblical model to see the attitude God wants us to have toward ourselves and to those around us. Philippians is probably the best book in the New Testament when looking at that subject, as Paul wrote about our need to place others above ourselves. The result of such self-sacrifice is the joy that comes from being united in one purpose and one mind.

Background Info

Paul wrote this epistle from prison, as evidenced by 1:13. He was imprisoned at Rome, as we can see from the fact that he was with the saints from Caesar’s household (4:22). This would date the letter in the early 60s. Of course, Paul had helped bring the church to Philippi on his second missionary journey, documented in Acts 16. From his wording, he clearly felt a very close connection with the brethren he was writing to. They had also supported him on multiple occasions (4:15-18), so he clearly had a rather personal interest in helping them fix the problems they were experiencing.

Key Themes

While many point to joy as the main theme of Paul’s writing (as he used “joy” seven times and “rejoice” another eight), that theme comes as a side to his main point, which is unity. Joy is made complete in our unity of mind and spirit (2:2). In achieving that unity, we must defer to one another and be willing to sacrifice our personal preferences to maintain that unity. Not only are we to give up ourselves to maintain unity, we are also shown that the same is necessary to glorify Christ. In whatever we do, that should be our main priority over ourselves. Finally, one of the major themes of the book is the list of examples Paul gives. In showing what true selflessness looks like, he gave four examples of people whom they could emulate.

Key Verses

There are plenty of familiar verses in this short epistle, particularly 4:13. In keeping with the themes, however, 2:1-4 and 4:2 are particularly noteworthy. 2:1-4 gives the basic command of the book – basically, love each other and humble yourselves before each other and before God to maintain unity in mind and purpose. 4:2 gives us a glimpse at one of the problems the church at Philippi was experiencing. “I urge Euodia and Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.” These two women were clearly having some kind of quarrel, which helps us understand why Paul decided to spend so much of his letter in exhorting the church to put each other first and not be self-centered.

Key People

Obviously Euodia and Syntyche were important characters in this writing because they helped provide the occasion. Their conflict drove a wedge in the church’s unity, taking away all the joy that comes from serving God together. Paul urged them to be

of the “same mind,” and then proceeded to provide four examples of men who showed what living with that same mind looked like. His first example, naturally, was Jesus Christ (2:5ff). We see all of the things Christ gave up for us and the difficult trials He went through because He had that mindset. Timothy was the next example, because he showed he was unlike others in that he cared for the interests of Christ instead of himself (2:21). Epaphroditus was also pointed to as a role model, since he had risked his life for the work of Christ (2:30). Finally, Paul reminded them of the things he gave up for the Gospel, but also that those things didn’t really matter because nothing of this world matters when it comes to Christ.

Key Words

The key words (as usual) closely follow the themes. As stated, “joy” and “rejoice” were used frequently. While not occurring as often as those two, the words occurring from 1:27-2:4, such as “one,” “mind,” and “same” are very important, as we can see from the unity theme.

The Christian life is one of joy in all situations, but when we put ourselves first we can fully expect that we will not have that joy, and we can easily rob those around us of it. Let’s make a concerted effort to put others first as much as possible, and also to strive for the unity that is found in Christ and His Word.