

Same Mind, Same Love, Same Joy (Part 7)

Philippians 2:19-30

Pastor Edward Cheng

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In Philippians 2, Paul has been urging the Philippians to honor Jesus by having an attitude of humility and selflessness, especially within church. Many of us know someone in church who exemplifies this selfless humility, who is dependable, faithful, kind, generous, and committed to tirelessly serving God by serving others. Personally, I'm thinking of a brother at my home church who would drive 15 minutes in the wrong direction to pick me up for church every Sunday, and never complained that I wasn't ready to leave a third of the time. This is the attitude of someone who puts Jesus at the center of his life, and shows it through his love for others. Paul tells us to honor and emulate such examples, and he also gives us several examples of selfless humility in this chapter.

The first and best example Paul gives is Jesus, who didn't hold on to His position of equality with God, but humbled Himself to take on flesh and die for mankind (vv. 5-11). Paul also gives himself as a brief example in vv. 17-18, because like Jesus he is willing to joyfully pour out his life for the sake of others. It's one thing to serve others in our excess, while still remaining in our comfort zone; but it's another thing entirely to prioritize others first, to serve to the point of discomfort, suffering, and even death. It's not easy to ask people to do more in church, but this high bar of selfless service is our testimony for Jesus. Our love for each other is what distinguishes the followers of Jesus from the world. Serving outside of our comfort zone looks different for everyone. It doesn't mean we all have to hold official positions of service in the church, but let us use whatever spiritual gifts we have to love each other and meet each other's needs out of genuine concern for them.

In vv. 19-24, Paul gives Timothy as yet another example of this selfless humility. Paul is currently facing a trial with a pending verdict, and plans to send Timothy to the Philippians once it is resolved. He describes Timothy as one who is genuinely concerned with their welfare, a hallmark of humility. He contrasts Timothy with the default behavior of most people, which is to look out for their own interest (v. 21). But here he subtly contrasts looking out for your own interests with looking out for the interests of Jesus Christ, rather than the interests of others. In doing so he equates concern for others to concern for Jesus. We serve Jesus by serving each other. Our commitment to Jesus is reflected in our commitment to each other. You cannot love

Jesus without loving each other. This applies in church and also in the family. For me, I strive to be faithful and to serve my wife and children not just because I love them, but because I love God. When you serve, do it out of love for them, but also ultimately out of love for Jesus. Also, in v. 22 Paul mentions that Timothy has proven worth. It speaks to his time-tested, consistent, dependable, and enduring attitude of humility and service. This attitude of service to others out of love for Jesus is not always easy, but we must be committed to it and endure, drawing on God's strength and allowing Him to work through us to do His will.

Next, in vv. 25-30 Paul gives Epaphroditus as a final example of this selfless humility. Epaphroditus was a member of the Philippian church, who was sent to support Paul through the trial, to bring the church's gifts to Paul, and to update him on the status of the church. Epaphroditus got sick on his journey, almost to the point of death, so Paul sends him back so that they know he is alright. And he sends Epaphroditus back with this sealed letter to the Philippians, which to Epaphroditus' surprise mentions him by name as an example of self-sacrificial service. Paul mentions Epaphroditus because he wants the Philippians to look up to people in their midst who have exemplary humility. Jesus gave up His life for others, Paul is willing to do likewise, and Epaphroditus almost gave up his life in service as well. This is the attitude Paul is pointing us to. In v. 29 he tells the Philippians to welcome Timothy and Epaphroditus, to receive them with honor. But this is not just to hold them in high regard, to be grateful for them, and to show appreciation. The ultimate purpose is that we should emulate these examples and have the same attitude as they do (v. 5). We should look to those who are living a life that reflects their love of Jesus, and strive to do likewise. Let us all pray for strength to imitate Jesus in our lives by serving others with selfless humility and genuine concern.