

Philippians 10-05-14a

This is Friday the 14th of May, 2010. We continue our study in the book of Philippians. We are in chapter 2. We have perused the first several verses.

We are going to look in detail at this section comprising verses 1 through 9 in particular. If we get any further than that, it will be a bonus. But there are some really fascinating things here that we will observe.

But we'll begin as we typically do by taking a moment to focus our concentration and recognize that where two or three are gathered in the Lord's name, He is in the midst. And since this is a doxology or a hymn of praise about the Lord Jesus, it is fitting to remember that as we study it together, shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for this opportunity to partake of the manna for our souls that is found in your word. We thank you for the ministry of the Apostle Paul, as have so many believers down through the centuries.

His communication of your truth is as fresh and as spiritually invigorating as it was at the beginning. We find his personal experience with the Lord Jesus shining through on every page and in every paragraph. And it is a wonderful opportunity for us to spend this time together in fellowship, receiving the blessing from each person who has chosen to gather with us and be a part of this study.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will enliven these truths for us and impress them on our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen. Having begun by expressing his own situation after the more or less standard elements of reading that are common to the epistles of Paul, he talked about a rather ironic situation.

His circumstances are negative. I don't think anybody would raise their hand if volunteers were requested to be imprisoned and be subject to trial and possible sentence of death by the Romans, who weren't particularly noted for their judicial mercy in those days. This isn't something you would seek out.

And yet he finds himself in more or less dire straits. But I started to say quixotically, but it isn't quixotic. It's ironic.

It is unexpected. Paul says that he is rejoicing. He says in verse 18, whether in pretense or truth, Christ is preached, and in this I rejoice and I am going to keep on rejoicing.

He says the things that have happened to me have turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. I see this as a positive development. This was all background, and he painted that scenery for us, his own circumstance.

So then, when you get to chapter 2, he says, Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if

there is any comfort of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Let this mind be in you, which also was in Christ Jesus. We've discussed this somewhat tangentially or not at great length in the past because this chapter is largely included in our memory verse packet, but when you look at it closely, it really comes to life. The last verse of chapter 1, it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to experience, to live out your life of circumstances for his sake.

Suffer is a bit strong. This means to, I can't think of a better term than experience, to live through circumstances for his sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me. Paul sums up that first chapter again, especially the portion about his own biographical details, by saying, you have the chance to experience the same thing I'm experiencing.

It's critically important to get the full brunt of what he's now going to say in chapter 2 to keep that in mind. He is referring back and he says, look, you might think that things are rough. You might be tempted to feel sorry for me.

You might be tempted to say, oh, poor Paul. He says, don't. The things that are happening to me are working out for the furtherance of the gospel.

I'm rejoicing in it. I see it as an opportunity, not an affliction. It's an opportunity.

It's not a burden. It's not a trial. It's not a sacrifice.

It's an opportunity. I look at this for its spiritual potential, not for its physical downside. This is a difficult corner for us to turn because we're not built this way by nature.

By nature, we want to feel sorry for ourselves. By nature, we want not only to pity ourselves, but to accrue and gather unto ourselves and unto our bosom the pity of others. It's much easier to see in other people, and I have nobody within the sound of my voice in mind when I say this next thing I'm about to say.

But there are people that I have been around in the work environment in days gone by, and I'm thinking now in excess of nine years ago. But I remember one instance in particular. There was a lady at my workplace downtown, and it was hazardous to say, Hi, how you doing? Because you didn't want the answer to the how you doing question.

Because she just seemed to be needy in the area of sympathy. Anything she would tell you seemed to be sucking you down a chasm of, Oh, my circumstances are so bad, and my husband this, and my family that. It's a sad thing to feel like you would rather make a circuitous route

around somebody's desk or past their door rather than take the chance of being sucked into the quicksand of their circumstances.

Not to say that you wouldn't feel sorry. She had some genuinely difficult things, but it just was very sad in a truly sad way. Well, Paul is just the opposite.

He says, Look, don't be weeping for me. I've got the Romans right where I want them. I've got them cornered.

They're chained to me. They can't get away when I preach. And all these people that are opposing me, guess what? I've got them all talking about Christ.

They would have been talking about the economy or the latest shipload of slaves that came into the market or the weather or some other thing. And instead, they're all talking about Christ. This is great.

That's how he chooses to look at it. How do we turn that corner? All of us innately, inherently, and often unconsciously crave attention. And one of the quickest ways to get attention is to have some sort of deficit.

To have something that draws sympathetic attention to us that meets one of Maslow's fundamental hierarchical needs down at the root level. If you can't get approval, pity will do. This is the thing.

The guys who can't get a girl to go out with them because she respects him and admires him, will try to get it on the basis of any other kind of coercion that will work. Oftentimes, it's, well, I'll make her feel guilty about hurting my feelings. This is basically getting a date based on pity.

That's horrible. It's horrifying if you look at it objectively. If you're the guy and the girl is the object of your desires, any strategy that will work.

But it's awkward for the girl. Girl's not going to have a good time and the guy hasn't thought that far. But Paul has set up this positive construction of his negative circumstances.

It is a positive construction. And it's not natural. It's not normal.

So this has created something by way of, if not exactly curiosity, at least a quizzical or sort of an impressed view on the part of the people who are hearing this letter. They've probably been talking to each other. Paul has heard through the messengers that have come that, boy, you know, your friends in Philippi, they love you so much and they care about you and they're just distressed to hear of your circumstances.

They're distraught. They're trying to put together care packages and, you know, Lydia's dying some purple stuff to send you. They're just trying all kinds of things, trying to think, how can we

help? What can we do? Paul is at risk of his life and he's saying, look, calm yourselves.

I look at this as a great thing. So now he's going to turn this because he doesn't want it to be all about Paul because even then they're going to say, oh, look at that Paul. He's such a hero.

Look at his perseverance. Look at his... And Paul says, I don't really... my goal in writing is not to just aggravate this even further by, you know, feeding my noble heroics into it. So what does he do in chapter two? Well, and that backdrop is part A of the essential background.

And here's part B, right at chapter two, verse one. Therefore if, and I'm going to give you a pretty literal translation from the Greek for these nine verses or so, because the word order really reminds me of Hebrew. I think Paul probably thought a lot in Hebrew when he was thinking scripturally because his scripture memorization would have been largely out of the Hebrew.

His pharisaical training would have been in the Hebrew. And you can see the Hebraisms coming out in his speech, which was then taken down by the Immanuensis and became these letters. So the word order, which is vastly flexible in Greek, kind of mirrors a sort of Hebraic original, or at least a Hebraic way of thinking.

So it strikes you in that way. I've talked about this before, how when you're reading the Hebrew text, it's almost, to me, like a movie. Each word is so pictorial and so evocative of imagery that it's like watching a Ken Burns thing where he's taking those still photos and he just, one goes to the right, one goes to the left, one zooms in, one zooms out, and you just get them in sequence and it tells a story.

And he almost makes a moving picture out of these still images. So much so that that effect of panning and zooming and so on is called the Ken Burns effect in software now. They say, oh, get our screensaver, you can do dissolves and fades and wipes and sweeps, or you can do the Ken Burns effect, and that's where each one comes up and does a different little motion.

Well, this is the Ken Burns effect in Greek. Verse 1, chapter 2, in English it says, Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy. And the way it comes across in English is kind of like, if there's anything to Christianity, then you need to fulfill my joy by doing the following things.

If there's anything to Christianity as far as the ability to engender love and so on, well then, you need to get with it. And I don't think that's what's going on here at all. So he starts out by saying, *etis un paraclesis in Christoi*.

If some or any, *tis* is a very flexible word. It's translated here, any. It is often translated some.

And then you have *therefore*. And in Greek, as you may know, the conjunctions are often post-positive. They aren't the first word in a sentence.

It's just the way the Greeks did it. They would start their thought and then stick in their therefores or their fores or their becauses. That's just how they did it.

So you have etis and then un, which means therefore. So if some, therefore, encouragement, paraclesis, call alongside the paraclete, the Holy Spirit, in Christ. That's how it starts.

And then he puts another conditional in. If t, which is just another form of tis, if some or any, paramouthion, agapes. Paramouthion, I talked about this word a little bit last time.

It's basically comfort, consolation, encouragement, bringing you back from the depressed depths. And if some, tis, any, koinonia numitas, spirit fellowship. And then a fourth conditional.

If some or any, this is tis again, splachna chi or termoi, and I talked about these words a little bit last time. Splachna is from the guts. It means that deep core of the heart.

Longing or affection or regard for a thing. The best way I can describe this, I think this will be the same for you. There have been times, especially when I'm standing in ranks, in uniform, and the color guard goes by and here's the flag, the American flag, there's the Marine Corps flag with all the battle streamers.

And there is a feeling you get inside that just almost chokes you up. You are struck not just by the moment or the occasion, but what it represents. Sometimes it's who you are with when you see a thing or you hear a thing.

I have been talking to my mother about spiritual things and get ready to quote a verse. I know that it means as much to her as it means to me and I can hardly get through quoting the verse without choking up because we have that in common and it's especially meaningful. You can hear the same verse in another context and it would just gloss right over.

But in certain times, in certain places, there is a feeling you get inside that just really is deeply moving. That's what splachna is. It's that really deeply moving involvement or regard or esteem for a thing that just blocks everything else out at that particular moment.

I would imagine that Olympic athletes standing on the topmost pedestal, when the flag goes up and they think back about all that they've worked for, especially in team sports, and it all came together and they succeeded. Graduation day, pinnacle highlight moments, your wedding day, birth of your child, pinnacle moments and that inner, core, strong, moving feeling. That's splachna.

That's what it is. Why is it in this passage? Paul says, if there is any splachna and all these other things, then fulfill my joy. Well, I was looking at it this week and looking at some other passages in Paul's epistles and here's, in my view, what he's actually saying.

Because you know from memorizing this verse what he's going to call on the Philippians to do. If

one, if two, if three, if four, fill my joy with joy. By being like-minded, having love, being of one accord of one mind, don't have selfish ambition.

So if these things are true, do the following. Well, this is not in the abstract. If there's any patriotism left, let's get behind Senator Umpty Fratz and elect him to the next term.

If there's any decency in the world, this ought to be done. It's not one of these abstract ifs. This is one of the most practical passages you can imagine.

In order to get it, we have to kind of preview or review the next set. What is Paul calling on them to do? Be like-minded, have love, be united in thought, and don't be selfish. We'll examine these in greater detail in a minute.

But can you always be like-minded? Can you always enter into this kind of fellowship, this kind of single-mindedness and mutual accord in a group of believers? When Billy Graham comes to town, can you be like-minded and one-souled and one heart and one mind and one purpose with churches that are widely divergent in certain areas of doctrine or don't believe certain things are true, like the inspiration of Scripture and Jesus was really just a man and sort of evoked God but wasn't actually God Himself? In other words, here is a command, it is an imperative, where Paul says, fulfill my joy by being these things. One accord, one mind, one soul. Well, you can't just take that as a command and say, well, this person is a believer, I've got to be like-minded, I've got to be one-souled, I've got to enter into this deep fellowship with them.

So since we know in practical terms that it's not possible, well, how do you know when it is possible? That's what he is telling us in verse 1. If there is in this fellowship, in this group, with this person or with these people, if there is paraklesis in Christo, if you are with believers who are genuinely comforted in Christ, genuinely encouraged in Christ, they are not encouraged by each other and their little mutual admiration society fellowship, they are not being encouraged by the particular tunes that get played in the praise music, they are not being encouraged by the wafting of the environmental factors to carry them away just like a really poignant movie would. That's not their comfort, that's not their paraklesis. If there is paraklesis in Christ, that's a condition.

If there is comfort of love, paramouthion agapes, if there is love that is an encouragement, that is a building up and genuinely helping kind of love, and you know the kind of love I'm talking about, all of us have experienced that love from others in this group, all of us have, and all of us I think have had opportunities to express it to one another, it's a wonderful thing, and you know this kind of love and what it is, if that exists. So first of all, is there a focus on Christ, and that's where the comfort is, that's where the encouragement is, because Christ is in it. That's really the core of the power and of the focus is in Christ.

And if there is comfort in the one another love, that's the second condition. The third condition is, if there is spirit fellowship in the area of spiritual things, we're on the same page. We're not contending, we're not arguing, we're not fighting for a position, we're not pushing a theology,

we're not trawling for fish, we're not pushing for converts, we're not trying to implement some kind of an agenda, there is a koinonia, there is a fellowship, there is a mutuality of spirit.

And fourthly, if there is *splachna* and *oiktirmoi*, which is, it's translated mercy here, *oiktirmos* is, the lexicon says, it's heartfelt compassion. So if there is *splachna* and *oiktirmoi*, which is compassion, it is mentioned of God in Romans 12.1, I urge you brethren by the *oiktirmoi* of God, by the mercies of God. 2 Corinthians 1.3, this word is used, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of *oiktirmoi*, the Father of mercies.

And these are compassions plural, this is mercy plural, compassions plural. And *splachna* is also plural. If there are affections and mercies, if there are deep connections and these mutual benefits, if those things exist, this is the environment in which you can fulfill Paul's joy.

You can't just find any old believer walking down the street that says, oh yeah, I believe in Jesus, and do the things that are going to fulfill that joy. These are the conditionals. Remember where we have other conditions that are exceedingly important to claiming the injunction, this enjoining from Paul.

And he says therefore, what's the therefore? Therefore because he's been talking about himself. And he says, look, these things are working out in my life, so here is how you can do the same thing I am doing. And that's what he means when you get down to the next phrase in the verse.

If there is *paramuthion* agape, if there is *koinonia* *numitas*, if there is *splachna* *enortirmoi*, of course *paraklesis* was first, but these four things. And if you look at the direction of them, first is toward Christ. There is encouragement in Christ.

The core and root of the relationship that brings this group together is Christ. And then it is mutual. There is comforting love, there is a partnering spirit, there is this deep seated recognition of what a great thing God is doing in that group, through his spirit, through his word, in Christ, that that is something you have in common, that deep appreciation, and its appreciations and mercies.

Paul says, fill the air with the spirit of Christ. This is the aorist active imperative. And any time you find an imperative, it is useful to look at the tense, because there are present imperatives and there are aorist imperatives.

What does a present tense suggest? We talked about this in connection with 1 John chapter 1. If we keep on walking in the light as he keeps on being in the light, we keep on having fellowship, one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son keeps on cleansing us from all sin. The present tense implies and suggests and connotes duration and an ongoing condition. So if you have a present imperative, it suggests the idea of keep on doing, keep on walking, keep on loving, keep on with what you are doing.

It has the idea of continue to do a thing with the present imperative. This is an aorist imperative. The aorist imperative is the kind of imperative that a commander would give to a Roman army unit, when he would say, right shoulder arms, left face, forward march.

Of course, if you right shoulder your machira, you are liable to lop your arm off, so they had other commands, but you get the idea. This is a command that means, you are at rest, come to attention. You are at attention, do a facing movement.

You are at attention, now forward march, column right march, column left march, to the rear march, whatever it might be, and you do a thing that you are not currently doing. That is the aorist imperative. So when Paul says, fulfill my joy, this is an aorist imperative.

So the notion is that this is something he is encouraging them to start doing. Apparently, he has heard that there is some consternation, there is some sorrow, there is some lack of joy in the Philippian Church. They are grieving for him too much, and they are, as a result, not really entering into the joy of their own fellowship either.

So he says, you need to be like-minded, you need to be of one accord, of one mind, you need to get behind this. Now, when he says this, as far as play *rao* in the aorist imperative, we normally think, fulfill, fulfill my joy. It sounds like, well, your main objective is to make me happy.

Once you find an environment where these things are true, and sometimes it is just two people, you find one other person that you can fulfill these conditionals with. Other times it is a group, and praise God when it is a group. Two or three or more, it is a rare and precious thing to find a fellowship and a communion of believers that have these things in common.

And it is worth rubies. Those of us that have spent years by ourselves, or just a few of us, not a good local church, not a place of Christian fellowship, it is priceless. And Paul says, when you have it, don't neglect it, don't take it for granted, don't miss it.

You could almost translate these *if* clauses as *when*, because they are *if* and it is true. And it doesn't fit the Greek construction for first class, second class, third class, because your verb is implied or understood here, there is no verb. It doesn't say *if* there is, you will notice in your New King James it is in italics.

But it is implied, and it is a more probable condition. When there is consolation in Christ, when there is comfort of love, when there is fellowship of the Spirit, when there is affection and mercy, fulfill my joy. And I think I've got time to do this.

When you look at the verb *plerao* and the way it is used in the New Testament, and we won't turn to the passages because I don't want to get too far afield, but you remember in the Gospels when it talks about this happened to fulfill what was spoken by the prophets, Jesus said, I have not come to destroy the law, but to do what? Fulfill it, *plerao*. And the meaning there doesn't just

mean to fill a thing up. Here is an empty prophecy, Jesus has poured something into it, and now it is full.

It means to accomplish. The connotation there, the meaning has this idea of if you fulfill a thing, I was given a command, I was given a mandate, I was given a task, and I fulfilled it, what does that really mean? I accomplished it. I entered into it and made it happen.

And so a colloquial translation would be, make it happen. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to make it happen, to accomplish it, its objectives, its purposes. Why did you have the law? The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Well, here Christ is. And so when Paul says, fulfill my joy, by the way, there is another place where Jesus says, he is talking to the Pharisees, and he says, your fathers tried to achieve righteousness by works, and stoned the prophets, and sawed them asunder, and all these other things, I am paraphrasing. And so now, fill up the measure of your fathers.

Go ahead and accomplish the same thing they did. Fulfill the measure, its metros in Greek, fulfill the meter, yardstick, if you will, of your fathers. Go on ahead.

Show me what you got. You are going to do the same thing your fathers did. You are going to do, or accomplish, or implement, and enter into the very same thing as your fathers.

That is what plerao means in that context. Well, what Paul is saying is, I have painted you a picture of my joy in the preceding paragraph. So when you find these conditions of like-minded believers who enter into these things of comfort and encouragement and fellowship, then accomplish, enter into the same joy I have just described.

I have showed you how I have this positive view of my negative circumstances. So, enter into the same thing. He is not saying, make me happy.

He is saying, enter into the same joy that I have. Fill up for yourself that same kind of joy. Fulfill the kind of joy I have.

In Greek, it is the joy of me. In fact, in Greek, it is the of me joy. Fulfill the of me joy that I have just described for you.

The kind of joy that you have seen in me. Accomplish it. Fill it up.

Make it happen for yourselves. Do you see the difference in the semantic weight of that? When you can find these conditions where you have got believers that enter into consolation, comfort, fellowship, affection, and mercy, you can get into this same joy that I have got, that I have described for you, by doing these things. It says in your English here, by being like-minded.

But in Greek, it says, in order that. Fill the of me joy. Implement.

Accomplish. Enter into joy like mine. In order that.

Heena. It doesn't mean by. Enter into my joy.

In order that you may think. This is phroneo. They talk about phrenologists.

They used to have phrenologists. These were head-bump readers. They thought there were palm readers, tea-leaf readers, and there used to be head-bump readers.

They were called phrenologists because this is your phroneo area up here. It's like your thinking would bulge your head out. So parts of your brain that were thinking too hard about one thing or another would make a bump.

They would read the bumps and say, ah. They could tell stuff from it. That's what I think of whenever I see phroneo.

I think of bumps in the head. So enter into this joy. The joy of me.

Accomplish the joy. In order that you might think. This is a subjunctive.

This is the present active subjunctive. In order that you might be thinking the same thing. We have automatic.

We have autonomic. We have all these things that begin with auto. Autoimmune.

Autoimmune means it attacks itself. It's attacking the same kind of tissue. My immune system is me and it attacks me.

Autoimmune disease is where your immune reaction goes off and attacks you. That's not good. You can't tell the difference between enemies and friendlies.

The IFF is not working. Auto means the same. Auto.

This is the present active subjunctive. Enter into this joy so that the same you plural might be thinking. The same love you may be having.

How does this all string together now? If you've hung with me this far, I've just got about two more minutes to go and it's the break. If you find yourself blessed by God with a situation where there is encouragement in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of spirit, and I think this by the way is small s. Spirit fellowship. If you want to put capital S it works just as well.

The spirit speaks to our spirit. The spirit enables our spirit. Where our spirit is nothing without the spirit capital S. Any way you want to work it.

I think this is spirit partnership, spirit fellowship, spirit communion. If there are these affections

and mercies, enter into Paul's joy. Paul-type joy.

My type of joy, Paul says, so that you are potentially thinking the same, loving the same, actually having the same love, sun-sukhoi, same-souled. It's not even same-souled. Sun-means with.

It's together-souled. After he says that in order that you are thinking the same, all of the rest of these are participles, which means they are nouns formed from verbs. This is your identity.

This is your name. So you are same-love-having-ones. When you are in this kind of fellowship and you are with this kind of believer or believers, and your goal is to look at it from the point of view of joy, you are going to be a same-love-having-one.

You are going to be a together-soul-having-person. Sun-sukhoi, this is a label for a type of person, a type of people. The sun-sukhoi are the together-souled-ones, the together-essence-ones.

The same or unity of thinking. Now you have froneo again, but instead of in order that you might think, now it is the one-thing-thinking-ones. This is fronuntes, it's a participle.

You are fronuntes, you are thinking-ones, thinking one thing. Thinking-ones, thinking one thing is about as close as you can get in English. These are states of being.

It goes even beyond the present tense of duration. This is an identity. This is a nature.

It becomes your nature. Notice that all these things happen group-wise. This is one-another type of stuff.

In the next verse, we are going to get into the each-to-the-other, each-with-the-other, one-another. This is the dynamic that comes from Christian fellowship. This is why it is so important that we not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

None of this can happen in isolation. You can't do it as an island. It is a worse stunting of spiritual growth to be isolated as a believer than it is to be wrongly theologizing, to get into hardcore Calvinism, or to get into Pentecostalism, or to get into some other doctrinal elaboration.

That will not mess you up as bad as being cut off from Christian fellowship. We are a body. People get a finger severed, or a limb severed, or an arm severed, and if they can get that thing fast enough and pack it in ice and so on, they can reattach and they can get it back in.

But if it stays apart from the body for very long, it dies and it is absolutely done. It is done and done for. We are the same.

We are members together of the body of Christ and we require, it is not nice to have, it is not hope to have, it is need to have, must have, Christian fellowship. Must have it. There will be periods, short periods, Elijah by the brook, Joseph in the dungeon.

There will be times when we will be isolated. Moses in the wilderness maybe, but not for long. Those are going to be testing times.

Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days. It was a time of testing. Joseph in prison, time of testing.

Elijah by the brook, time of testing. When you are by yourself, it is a specialized test, the norm, the usual. It is kind of like when a man is not yet married.

Not good for the man to be alone. It is a test when he is alone. God be praised when you find your help meet because now it is good.

Well, it is by analogy the same for us. We are not designed as believers to be alone. We need to look for believers with whom we can share consolation in Christ, comfort of love, spirit fellowship, affections plural and mercies plural.

You have to spend time with somebody to have multiple affections and multiple mercies, right? This is where you can enter into the kind of joy that Paul expresses and find yourself with believers who are thinking the same, possessing the same love, possessors of the same love, possessors of a together soul, and one thing, thinking one. It is what everybody looks for. This is why gangs form because of disaffected and isolated kids, teenagers look for what they are not getting at home in gangs, acceptance, comfort, encouragement, friendship, companionship.

You know, Dionne Warwick or somebody said what the world needs now is love. Well, this is what everybody is looking for. This is what God has built into our life through Christ.

This is where the joy is found. It is rooted and anchored in Christ, but it is fulfilled, it is accomplished in our communion. We will pause here and take a break.

When we come back, we will look at the next couple of verses here and see how this is expressed.